









**THE LIFE OF  
SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT.**

*With five illustrations in photogravure.*





*Sir William Harcourt  
in his study at 22, Grosvenor St. 1904*





THE LIFE OF  
SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT

By  
A. G. GARDINER

IN TWO VOLUMES  
VOLUME II  
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## CHAPTER I

### PARTIES IN THE MELTING POT

Position of the Dissident Liberals—Chamberlain's attitude—An encounter with Speaker Peel—Future of Land Purchase—Parnell's Tenants' Relief Bill—Party Conference at Leeds—Towards reconciliation with Chamberlain.

THE great overthrow which the new Irish policy had sustained at the General Election of July 1886 seemed, on a superficial view, final and irrevocable. That impression was strengthened by the fact that, but for the unrivalled<sup>d</sup> prestige of Gladstone, the overthrow would have been even more decisive. The position of the Parnellites as the balancing factor in the House of Commons had gone with the suddenness and completeness of a snowfall in May. Leaving aside the Liberal Unionists, the Conservatives alone had a substantial majority over Gladstonians and Parnellites combined, and with the Liberal Unionists a crushing superiority. But the situation was not so simple as these first obvious considerations suggested. Much water was to flow under the bridges before the Liberal Unionists were to be severed from their Liberal affiliations and to become an indistinguishable element of the Conservative Party. On general policy they were still Liberals, and even on the Irish question many of them had as much distaste for coercion as they had for Home Rule. The new party attachments were *ad hoc* and experimental, and it remained to be seen whether they could bear the strain which events would put upon them. Salisbury, who at Gladstone's suggestion had been sent for by the Queen, was acutely sensible of the delicacy and difficulties of the

position, and very wisely desired a purely Unionist Government, even securing the Queen's assent to his proposal of a Hartington Ministry. But the relatively small number of Liberal Unionists made this impracticable, and a Conservative administration was formed, with the Liberal Unionists in friendly but vigilant reserve.

The absorption of the Whigs in the Conservative system seemed a very natural development of the near future; but the submergence of the Radical Unionists was still unthinkable. It was not many years since the advent of the republican ex-mayor of Birmingham to Parliament had seemed as ominous a portent as the appearance later of Keir Hardie in a cloth cap, and his name had lost little of its terror for the propertied classes and especially for the landed aristocracy who formed the backbone of the Conservative Party. He was the key to the situation, and his Radical sympathies and his well-known relations with the Parnellites in the past alike made his future activities incalculable. He had tried his fall with Gladstone, and had rolled him in the mud, but he had surrendered none of his general views, and might still be regarded as the most advanced and aggressive figure in politics. There was a widespread conviction that his dissentient attitude was due in part to his temperamental hostility to Gladstone and to his irritation at the failure of his scheme of Irish settlement in the previous summer and the substitution of a Gladstonian alternative. Whether this did injustice to him or not, there seemed no reason why, agreeing with the principle of the late Bill and differing only with its method, he should not himself provide a solution. That, having taught Gladstone a lesson and perhaps expedited that final retirement which had been threatened since 1874 and seemed now so long overdue, he looked to the reunion of the Liberal Party as a strong possibility is evident from his communications with Harcourt. Writing to him (July 19) before the election was quite over, but when the result was assured, he asked him for his opinion as to the course of events, discussed the result of the polls, deplored the division,

which he attributed to Gladstone's determination to deny to him the slightest influence or following, and expressed his annoyance at the idea that Gladstone's conduct should give the Tories a long lease of power. In the course of his reply Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

TREASURY, July 20.— . . . It is far better that we should now decently bury our dead in the sure and certain hope of a resurrection, not of the same body but of a more glorified form, rather than to have an unseemly battle over the corpse. There will be no occasion therefore for you to defile our ashes. This is the sensible as well as the good-tempered view of the situation, which I assure you Mr. G. takes as completely as any of the rest of us, and he has expressed repeatedly a strong desire to take the course which would best conduce to the reunion of all sections of the Party.

I will not go back on the past. I am not concerned to criticize any of the parties to the transaction. I adhere very much to the views I stated at your house in Birmingham last December, viz. that if Mr. G. insisted the thing must be tried. It has been tried, and for the present has failed. Whether anything else will succeed better remains to be seen. If not, Home Rule will have to be revived in some other form. Whether anything which could have done better could at an *earlier stage* have been settled between you and Mr. G. I cannot say, but I am sure that *after your migration* he could not have accepted your ultimatum without altogether alienating the Parnell Party, and to make a proposal which they would not accept was, and always will be, futile.

The great majority of the Unionist Liberals were, and are, nearly as hostile to your views as to those of Mr. G. That is the great difficulty of Salisbury and Hartington. Any proposal which gives any substantial self-government to Ireland will be bitterly and passionately opposed by the Irish Protestants and Tories, and any scheme they could possibly bring forward would be repudiated by both parties in Ireland. They might try *bribes*, but we shall beat them on that tack. . . .

What will happen in October God only knows—not even Parnell—who probably has not yet made up his mind as to his line of conduct. Even if the Tory Government do not propose coercive measures there will most probably be a long debate on Ireland and Irish policy, and then the Nationalists can obstruct Supply to their hearts' content. I have good reason to believe that Parnell is sick of the H. of C. game, and that he desires to get the eighty-six expelled. I don't think it unlikely that they may end that way, and that so the Irish members will leave Westminster not after our fashion. That of course would only be the beginning of the end, for I fancy



even you are hardly yet ripe for the *Crown Colony* policy. However, this is all conjecture. . . .

Is there no chance of our *accidentally* meeting before long somewhere where we could talk over affairs better than it is possible to write.

I met Hartington at Londonderry House last night, and had some chaff, but no serious talk. He expressed surprise that he should meet me in the house of the *author of the Union* (Castlereagh). I said, "I came to point out to you that the author of the *Union* ended by *cutting his own throat*, a warning which I commend to your attention." He would be a great fool if he threw away the very strong position he holds by joining the Tories. . . .

By the way the G.O.M. will be without a house in town. If you are going away why don't you offer him the use of yours? It would be a delicate attention!

Chamberlain replied (July 21) that as to the future if the Irish were wise they would avoid any repetition of their previous amiable practices of obstruction and assassination; if they yielded to the temptation to commit either parliamentary or personal outrages he would advocate crushing them by the strongest coercion. But he volunteered an "accidental" meeting by saying that he was coming to London, and asking Harcourt to give him a dinner in order that he might introduce his son Austen to Loulou.

Harcourt reported the resulting conversation to Gladstone, who replied:

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

COOMBE WOOD, KINGSTON-ON-THAMES, *August 2*.—I have reflected on your report of Chamberlain's conversation. And I remember that, during the worst of all his proceedings after resignation, he was always declaring his anxiety for an accommodation. The test of all such declarations must be in his acts, and the coming election at Birmingham supplies such a test. You appeared to regard his conduct in this election at Birmingham (it must be remembered what he did in the same district on the last occasion) as quite uncertain, and yet to attach some value to his genial words; which I am inclined to regard as worn out by frequent use.

At any rate I see clearly the defining lines of my own position. I am in Parliament to contribute if I can to the settlement of the Irish question, and in no case to impede it. Any settlement that Ireland accepts, I should be very loth to impede. I even ask myself whether it might be possible for the new people to frame some initial plan of federation, and begin by dealing with the Irish part of it.

This mode, if possible, would correspond with one at least of Chamberlain's many declarations.

Next to the Irish question I desire to do everything for the reunion of the Party, though with doubts whether this can be effected until Ireland is out of the way, and therefore with a disposition to mislike *prima facie* whatever may seem like a plot to gain time and unity to prolong our present embarrassments. As in the case of Ireland, so in the matter of reunion, I am above all things determined not to be personally an obstacle in the way of what is good.

Events at Birmingham, where Henry Matthews, the new Conservative Home Secretary, was returned with Chamberlain's support, justified Gladstone's suspicions. It was not a hopeful beginning for the reconciliation, or at least the resumption of contact, on which Harcourt's mind was fixed. However he persevered. He conceived the idea of entertaining Gladstone at dinner to meet "the late Cabinet of the House of Commons" before the assembling of the new Parliament; but at Gladstone's suggestion the company was limited to some of his supporters, and Parliament met on August 19 without any further steps towards reconciliation. In the meantime Gladstone had gone to Tegernsee with Lord Acton, and the task of leading the Opposition in the House of Commons at the opening of the new Parliament fell to Harcourt. It fell to him as a matter of course, for there was no one else on the Opposition side who had anything like either his experience or his parliamentary gifts. He adopted, according to his manner, a combative attitude, but qualified it with such wit and good humour that even his foes enjoyed the hearty revels he brought into the House. He had abundant material for his comedy vein in the strange jumble of parties and opinions which composed the Government legions. That confusion was at once apparent in the timidity of the Queen's Speech, whose only constructive proposal was a royal commission to inquire into the working of the Irish Land Act, while on the larger issue Churchill, the new leader of the House, foreshadowed a system of local government in the four countries which formed the United Kingdom. Harcourt likened this love of royal commissions to the passion of

the artist, mentioned by Canning, for red lions. In every kind of picture this man painted a red lion, and the Government evaded every issue by a royal commission.

As the debate proceeded, the breach between the Liberals inevitably emerged to the surface. Chamberlain taunted the Gladstonians with the prospect of wandering in the wilderness for forty years, and when in the course of his reply (August 27) Harcourt was interrupted by Mr. (Lord) Chaplin, he said, "It is preposterous that my right hon. friend the member for Birmingham should, for an hour by the clock, stand here abusing all the gentlemen among whom he sits, and yet that we are not to be allowed to reply to him." He retaliated on him for "the extraordinary soreness" he seemed to display. He was the real author and director of the Government policy. "We may have to wander in the wilderness," he remarked with a sad inflection of his voice, and then, while the Tories cheered, he added, thoughtfully scratching his forehead, "Oh, yes, but that happened to the chosen people." And the cheers were on his side. "But," he continued, looking first at Chamberlain by his side and then pointing to the Tories on the Treasury bench, "they did not follow the first man who invited them to go after the flesh-pots of Egypt." Later in the debate (September 2) he turned his guns upon Churchill as the author of the Belfast riots. What was his object in going to Belfast and calling on Ulster to fight? "There are some places where it is neither necessary nor desirable to poke up the fire." The Orange movement had long been the curse of Ireland. It represented "government by ascendancy, by Protestant ascendancy, by class ascendancy, by race ascendancy." Feeling rose high at the weight of these blows, and the Speaker (Peel) called Harcourt to order on the ground of irrelevancy, a proceeding which brought an indignant letter from Gladstone to Harcourt.

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

TEGERNSEE, September 6.—I am extremely vexed at the report in Friday's *Times* of the Speaker's encounter with you. You seem

to have behaved with perfect dignity, but I think he committed the gravest error I can remember ever to have been committed in the Chair. . . . What could be more legitimate than when Randolph's speech was directly relevant to the Amendment, and when it contained a direct reference to the Orangemen of 1798 as a model, you should discuss their conduct : and this even if he had been an ordinary member, much more when you were canvassing the conduct of a minister. You have not suffered, but the reverse : it is Peel who has suffered, for evidently a shock has been given by the proceeding, and it will be difficult to get rid of the consequences. I am very sorry for it, inasmuch as he is a man of excellent qualities and had done very well in a most difficult post. I was not, however, from observation in the last Parliament, without fears of him in the Irish business, and it was on this account that in seconding him I adopted a method which I thought might help to place him on his guard in Irish matters.

Your speech seemed to me admirable, and indeed I am very well satisfied with all that has met my eye. . . .

It has been most wise not to collide with the dissentient Liberals (whom I cannot call Unionists), but the position taken by H. and C. [Hartington and Chamberlain], and apparently agreed to by the followers, is such that matters cannot last long after the real meeting of Parliament without further developments in one sense or another. . . .

Harcourt took his brush with the Speaker quite amiably. "The Tories very furious with my assault on Randolph," he wrote to his wife (September 3). "The Speaker, who is not well, got irritable. Our people were angry, and kept up the fight for an hour after I went away and are to renew it to-day, but I shall counsel peace and moderation. It is too hot for fight. . . ."

But the debate discovered not only the weak places in the armour of the Government ; it revealed a sore spot in the ranks of the Gladstonians. The introduction of the Land Purchase Bill, urged by Spencer and Mr. Morley as a corollary of Home Rule, had never been popular with the Party and had been largely responsible for the debacle. In the discussions on the Government idea of the conversion of dual ownership into single ownership by land purchase, Harcourt said that, whatever the merits of the proposal, the action of the Conservatives and the Liberal Unionists on the subject had made it a practical

impossibility. "I believe," he said, "it can never receive the support which would be necessary to the dealing with such vast sums of money." Both Spencer and Mr. John Morley were alarmed. The latter wrote to Harcourt:

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

FRENSHAM, FARNHAM, *August 29.*—I greatly admired your powerful reply to Chamberlain, but I think that your repudiation of the policy of the Land Bill for the future gives him practically the best of it, and leaves some of us, including Mr. G., in a very awkward position. We say that there is an obligation of honour, and next, we say that H. Rule would never work if the Irish Parliament were left with the landlords on their hands. You say—in effect—that the constituencies don't recognize the obligation, and that henceforth you wash your hands of Land Purchase at any price.

You may be right—but I cannot make out why it was necessary to say it now.

Chamberlain, of course, saw his advantage instantly. He at once whispered to me eagerly. "Do you agree with Harcourt? If you don't, you are divided already." I gave him no answer, or an evasive one, but they will now spare no effort to "draw" Spencer and me. . . .

Spencer was no less disturbed. "You went beyond Mr. Gladstone and his pamphlet," he wrote, "for he distinctly says that it is right for us to deal with the land difficulty, while announcing the end of the twinship of the two measures." If it meant that he (Spencer) was to go out of politics it was no great matter; "but John Morley is of great moment, and if I interpret your speech properly you seem to separate yourself from him on this important point." Harcourt, replying to Mr. Morley (August 31), said he thought he had confined himself to Gladstone's declaration (in the pamphlet published after he left for Tegermsee) that "Home Rule and Land Bill were henceforth *separable*."

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

. . . You may depend upon it (he continued) you never can or will have Home Rule *with* a Land Bill. You may perhaps have it without. The Land Bill did, and always will, kill the Home Rule measure. I am sure this is Mr. G.'s *esoteric* opinion. I don't think there are half a dozen members of our Party who would vote for any measure buying out the landlords, and if we mean to stick to this as a *sine qua non* we may as well give up the whole concern. However,

you will observe that as to the future of a Land Bill I was careful only to speak for myself. . . .

When you say "Chamberlain sees his advantage," the advantage is in pinning you to a Land Bill on which he can always smash you, and not in what I said, which would force him into the position of opposition to Home Rule *per se*.

Meanwhile, the storm clouds were rising over Ireland. Two elections had taken place in nine months. The first, condemning coercion, had raised Irish hopes higher than ever before; the second, cancelling the first and condemning conciliation, had dashed them to the ground. Nor was this all. The state of the peasants had once more touched low-water mark, and even *The Times*, hostile as it was to Ireland, had declared that the rentals of the weak and even the comparatively strong men would have to be written off as a bad debt. What was to be done? The tenants, it was admitted, could not pay. Were they to be evicted? Parnell gave notice of a Tenants' Relief Bill. The question of the suspension of evictions was the crux of the matter. Gladstone, writing to Harcourt from Tegernsee (September 7), said: "At the same time I feel, more and more, that the appointment of a Commission to inquire into rents is in itself an admission that there is a *prima facie* case for reduction in certain cases: and that to allow eviction, in such cases, during the examination of the matter, is totally indefensible." He expressed his readiness to come back to support the second reading of Parnell's Bill (which had been amended at the suggestion of the Liberal leaders) if Harcourt thought it necessary. Harcourt wrote (September 10) that he must come back.

. . . Morley and I (he said) shall be placed in a false and almost cruel position if we are liable to be told by our opponents and by the lukewarm of our own Party that we are rashly acting in the teeth of your judgment—a thing which in your absence we have no means of refuting.

The information I have at present is that the Hartington party will support the Government in force, and that the Chamberlain section will abstain. The abstention of the latter will be a strong weapon in our hands, but it will be altogether blunted if they can point to your abstention as neutralizing it. Indeed when I said to

Hartington, yesterday, "I hear Chamberlain is *going away*," his reply was, "And I hear Mr. Gladstone is *staying away*." This will do us great *harm* and depress the Party all through the country. . . .

Gladstone hastened back, writing letters to Harcourt on the way, in one of which he returned to the question of the Speaker's "sad blunder in your case." "A second such case," he said, "would make his position untenable." The plea for suspension of the eviction campaign was powerfully argued, but the Government were immovable, and Parnell's Bill was thrown out by a majority of 95. With that declaration of war on the peasant, Parliament rose.

## II

"Whatever else happens I mean to have a quiet October," wrote Harcourt (October 4) to Spencer, who had written to him on the subject of whether there should be autumn campaigning. Harcourt agreed with Lord Rosebery that it was wise for ex-ministers to be quiet at the moment. He had made no engagements, and meant to make none. Malwood was at last completed, and he was revelling in the delights of the New Forest and writing to Gladstone of the wonders of the autumn tints. "I was never more resolved than I am now that the trees shall not be turned into any *other* kind of gold," he said with a sly dig at the proposals to fell wood in the Forest for the profit of the Crown. But his plans were interfered with. The annual meeting of the National Liberal Federation to be held at Leeds was approaching, and Mr. Morley, who was to have been the chief speaker, wrote to him asking him to take his place, because Churchill was speaking just before at Bradford, and "you will demolish Churchill, who will need it," while "I am not meant for a demolisher." Harcourt protested, but when Gladstone—"my eye, fairly bunged up by a wasp, is open again 3 p.m."—wrote also entreating him to go and "pound Randolph" he yielded. On his way he called, with Mr. Morley, at Hawarden, from whence he wrote (November 2) to his wife, "This morning was lovely, and we walked about in the grounds,

and the G.O.M. took odd chops at a big tree which will take about as long felling as the Union."

He went on to Leeds (November 3) and duly "pounded Randolph," in a speech of boisterous gaiety. Referring to the future of Home Rule, he recalled the history of all political movements :

" . . . When the Liberal Party proposes some great reform the Tories declare it is mischievous and dangerous, that its authors are wicked and profligate men and so they go on, it may be for ten years, it may be for five years, it may be for one year, or for six months, and then all of a sudden they turn round and find that this measure was an excellent measure, and they say, "Only let us be in office and we will do it ourselves." If this has been the case with Liberal reforms in the past, do you doubt that it will be the history of Liberal reforms in the future ? . . .

"Oh," they say, "Yes, but we succeed where you fail." Well, why ? If you are dragging a cart up a hill, and if you have got a strong horse behind it pulling against you it is a difficult job, but if that horse which was pulling against you behind is harnessed on in front it is much easier of course to get up the hill. That is the history of all Liberal reforms. . . . The plans which they declared dangerous they adopt. They say, "See what great reformers we are." That is all very well if it were not that years and generations have been lost by those processes, by that obstinate resistance to things which are afterwards admitted to be just and right ; and depend upon it you will find they will in a short time do the same with Home Rule as they have done with other subjects.

There was much correspondence between Gladstone, Harcourt and Mr. Morley during the next few weeks as to policy. Mr. Morley was going on a speaking tour in Scotland, and was disturbed by the demands that he should raise Disestablishment, which would "make the split still more besplitten." Harcourt himself was also being urged by Schnadhorst to go to Wales to raise the banner of Disestablishment, but he declined to complicate an already too complicated situation by raising an issue on which, as a stout Erastian, he never felt very acutely. The position of the Gladstonians as the true guardians of Liberal ideas was made more difficult by Randolph Churchill's proclamation of "Tory democracy," which had naturally stimulated the appetite of the Liberal Party in the country for drastic



reform. Writing to Harcourt (November 16), Gladstone said :

. . . Randolph, by taking up the Liberal Programme, has, as was to be expected, caused a *superfætation* of Radical ideas on our side. I do not know how you view this. I will not break with the 200 (the Federation) or the Radical section of them if I can help it. But I am rather too old to put on a brand new suit of clothes.

But Harcourt insisted that if his clothes were *stolen* he must "for decency's sake assume new garments." In a long letter (November 17) to Gladstone, in which he protested against his practice of "directing to me *simpliciter* 'New Forest' as if I was William Rufus," he discussed many questions raised by Gladstone, and, referring to the conflict between Austria and Russia in the Balkans, and the danger of England being involved in it, he said :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

. . . The old fetish of the "integrity of the Ottoman Empire" is as dead as a door nail and we shall hear no more of it. It seems to me that the Czar is in such a position with reference to Bulgaria that whatever are the consequences he cannot retreat, and must move forward either diplomatically or physically. I very much doubt, if he does, whether Austria will forcibly resist. She has plainly no promise of support from Bismarck, or Kalnoky's tone would have been much firmer than it was. The cocks are all crowing in the cockpit of Europe. The variations and permutations of the several Powers, Germany, Russia, Austria, France and Italy may be infinite in their combination. For us I am convinced there is but one safe and solid position, viz. that of *absolute uncompromising neutrality* in the quarrel—I hope we shall take the ground as a Party at once, hold it strongly, proclaim it as our policy, and abide by it firmly.

We have not yet recovered the effects of the fatal error of the Crimean War, and we will not let any Government repeat it. . . .

But Harcourt's main preoccupation during these days in the New Forest was neither the storm clouds abroad nor domestic problems at home, but the reunion of the Party. He was, before everything else, a party man. He believed in the party system as the instrument of ordered government, and saw in the break-up of parties the threat of anarchy and of the disintegration of the social system.

His heart still strayed to Birmingham, and when Chamberlain returned from a tour with Jesse Collings in Turkey, he held out an olive branch to him, couched in the following breezy terms :

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

MALWOOD, December 13.—I am glad to see that you have returned from your ticket-of-leave. The late Home Secretary will wink hard at this breach of prison regulations. You have probably returned from the East in a condition of deplorable ignorance as to the state of civilization in the West, especially in the westernmost of the British Islands. As I am always desirous to enlighten the benighted I feel a yearning to see you. In the New Forest a fez and loose breeches will not attract attention. Pray come and see us. If you are accompanied by the father of the dissolute David (Jesse Collings), the chief eunuch of your seraglio, we shall be all the better pleased. He will find here plenty of Uriahs with an allotment and a ewe lamb apiece, though I fear he has abandoned all these early enthusiasms of his agrarian innocence.

I daresay you think you are the only man who ever built a new house, but that is not the fact. Here we are on the top of a hill. I can promise you that which even Birmingham in its regenerate state can hardly offer you, a country in which the scent of a Liberal within a range of 10 miles shall not offend your nostrils. I live here as a separatist resembling a leper in the Holy Land, and the people as they see me pass by on the other side and cry "unclean, unclean!" There is only one thing that I think could by possibility rehabilitate me, and that is that you should have been known to have visited me in this "lodge in some vast wilderness, a boundless contiguity of shade." I can promise you a warm house and warmer welcome. Ireland shall never be mentioned except with twenty-four hours' notice, and on the top of the bookshelves in my library you will see the "blackguard Pitt," the author of the Union, before whom you may make your daily devotions on the carpet you have no doubt brought with you from Mecca.

You owe me a visit, and if you are an honest man you will pay your debts. You will remember that it is just about a twelvemonth ago that Loulou and I came to see you at Birmingham, when we sat up till two o'clock in the morning endeavouring to mitigate the violence of the furious repealer Jesse, who in answer to all our objections, to all our difficulties as to the abrogation of the Union, contemptuously repulsed us by the reiterated statement that those were "administrative details"—details which since then have overthrown two administrations, and will probably prove fatal to many more. Since that time a great deal has happened, and many things are changed except that I am always yours sincerely.

Chamberlain replied in similar vein. He would rejoice to join him in historical researches, but his engagements made it impossible for him to pay his visit to Malwood until later. However, contact had been resumed, and two events followed a week later which seemed suddenly to bring an accommodation in sight. Two days before Christmas the country was startled by the announcement in *The Times* that Churchill had resigned the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. His conflicts with the old guard of the Conservative Party had reached a crisis over finance, in regard to which he had assumed Harcourt's "skinflint" attitude with more than Harcourt's claim to dictate to the departments, and in a moment of irritation he threw up his office.<sup>1</sup> It was, for him, a fatal miscalculation. He had in five or six brief years gone up like a rocket, but after the explosion nothing of his political career remained. The assumption on which his action was based, that the Salisbury Government could not live without him, proved wrong. For a moment the situation hung in the balance. Salisbury appealed without success to Hartington to take the premiership, and the collapse of the administration or the return of Churchill on his own terms seemed possible. But Churchill's spring was countered from an unforeseen quarter. Goschen, whom he had "forgotten," stepped into the breach, thus creating the first official Conservative contact with the Whig wing of the dissentient Liberals.

It was a master stroke, and Churchill's fall was final. But with his fall the appropriation of the Radical clothes was repudiated. Salisbury had no love for other people's clothes, and loathed those colleagues who yearned to wear them. With the disappearance of what he called the "carbuncle on the neck" he was at last master in his own house. But the fact had other repercussions. The Radical wing of the dissentient Liberals had fixed their hopes on

<sup>1</sup> Lord Harcourt used to relate that when Churchill declared that the advice previously given him by Harcourt had prompted his resignation, Harcourt answered, "Yes, but when I resigned I had the Prime Minister on my side."

Churchill as the instrument of their purposes. Now that he was gone they found themselves attached to a purely reactionary system, reinforced by one whom Chamberlain disliked even more than a Tory, the Whig "skeleton at the feast." That same day (December 23) Chamberlain delivered a speech which could only be construed into a desire for reunion, and Harcourt, always eager to snatch at any chance of saving the party ship at once communicated with him, expressing his readiness to co-operate towards that end. From this incident sprang the memorable Round Table Conference.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ROUND TABLE

Lord Randolph's Resignation—The Plan of Campaign—Chamberlain's conciliatory attitude—Gladstone's view of a *modus vivendi*—Preliminary negotiations between Harcourt and Chamberlain—Mr. Morley's suspicions—Meetings of Round Table Conference—Chamberlain at Hawick—The *Baptist* Letter—The rupture—Mr. Morley's hostility to Chamberlain—Mr. Trevelyan's return to the Party—Harcourt's Derby Speech on the Conference.

IT was a cheerful Christmas for the Gladstonians. "My battledore returns heartily (if that implement has a heart) your 'happy Christmas and New Year,'" wrote Gladstone to Harcourt on Christmas Eve. "Whatever else Randolph has done he has given me a merry Christmas," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. The latter was no less cheerful. "You showed so much real good nature," he wrote to Harcourt (December 24), "about the relations between him [Chamberlain] and me that I am sure you will be glad to hear that he wrote me a couple of days ago a particularly cordial and friendly letter (the first for nearly a twelvemonth) wishing me all good things (to-day is my birthday), hoping we should carry as little bitterness as possible into public discussion, etc. I responded in the same vein, and feel much happier in consequence. I don't suppose this has any political motive whatever, but it certainly makes things easier for me."

The two happenings of December 23 had warmed the Opposition atmosphere as much as they had chilled that of the Government. Churchill's resignation and the consternation it had caused in the ministerial ranks, had opened

out a new political landscape, and in the foreground of that landscape was a glimpse of Chamberlain carrying what looked like an olive branch. The two events were closely connected. There were many disagreements between Churchill and his colleagues, on local government, on finance, on Ireland, on foreign affairs. "R. C. gives it to be understood," wrote Harcourt to his wife (December 29), "that he did not go out on finance, but that he withstood Salisbury who in the interest of the Court was thrusting Battenbergism on the Continent and bringing about a European war." But his financial proposals—he contemplated a big succession duty—spread alarm among the landed interest, and were the immediate cause of his resignation. The ultimate causes of the breach, however, were deeper. Churchill was as disruptive a force in politics as Chamberlain, and had less than Chamberlain's continuity of purpose. He had in the past two years swung violently to and fro between the extremes of Irish policy, and in his present phase of Tory democracy seemed to represent within the Cabinet much of what was associated with Chamberlainism. He was entirely distrusted by what he had called "the old gang" of his party, who suspected that he was now little better than the instrument of Chamberlain, and he returned the distrust with the loathing and impatience of his fiery and undisciplined spirit. His dramatic proceeding had very varying reactions on the political leaders. It caused mingled joy and panic in the ministerial ranks. It gave delight to Gladstone. "The question is raised," he wrote to Harcourt (December 24), "whether after all R. Churchill has a conscience. This is good, for it is really material to the country that he should have. Even the poor shrunken decrepit form that was once in my young days stalwart, the form of public economy, may have some life breathed into it."

No one was more directly affected by the event than Chamberlain, who was intimately acquainted with the causes of Churchill's quarrel with his colleagues. If Churchill's coup failed, the leader of the Radicals would

be left as a supporter of an unmitigated Tory ministry. Even if the Whigs joined the Government, they would be a poor substitute for Churchill. Chamberlain had only recently emerged from a bitter quarrel with Hartington and Goschen, and his reconciliation with them proceeded from no real agreement on Ireland and might vanish at any turn of the wheel of events.

Already a change had come over the sky in Ireland which threatened to put a severe strain on his support of the Government. The rejection of Parnell's Tenants' Relief Bill had been a declaration of war on the impoverished peasantry, and the effects were immediate. The tenants on the Woodford estate in Galway belonging to Lord Clanricarde—who had never been seen by his tenants—refused to pay the impossible rents demanded of them, with the result that innumerable evictions were carried out with all the accompaniments of military force, sieges, houseless families by the roadside, and other incidents that lost nothing through the telling of W. T. Stead in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. This policy of violence was met by the Plan of Campaign, first declared by Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. John Dillon at Woodford—a plan for combined action by the tenants, who were to offer the landlords' agents what they agreed they could pay, handing it over, if it were refused, to a fund for the support of the evicted tenants. The Plan of Campaign was an immediate success, and evoked the inevitable retaliation. Mr. Dillon and Mr. O'Brien were arrested, and a new agrarian war of extreme violence was inaugurated. Chamberlain saw himself in danger of being involved in a bitter attack on the peasantry in the interests of the absentee landlords and at the instance of a Tory Government now unchecked by Churchill's impulsive but humane instincts.

In these circumstances he made the speech of Dec. 23 at West Birmingham which interpreted Churchill's resignation as meaning that the old Tory influence had gained the upper hand in the Government, and urged grounds for a Liberal reconciliation. "I am convinced," he said, "that

sitting round a table and coming together in a spirit of compromise and conciliation, almost any three men, leaders of the Liberal Party . . . would be able to arrange some scheme, etc." In this mood, also, he wrote the birthday letter which had given Mr. Morley so much pleasure. The atmosphere was peculiarly favourable for a *rapprochement*. Nearly a month before (November 29) Mr. Morley told Harcourt, after a visit to Hawarden, that Gladstone was revolving the project of a conference. A meeting of the Liberal Unionists at Willis's rooms on December 7, when Hartington, Selborne and Goschen were very hostile to Hawarden, seemed to put the idea out of the question. Chamberlain had sent a telegram to the meeting from the East. It was, said Harcourt to Mr. Morley, "nasty without being strong. Being interpreted it meant he [Chamberlain] was open to any plan so long as Mr. G. ate dirt." If not ready to eat dirt, Gladstone was willing to go far. Spencer, who did not believe in reunion at present, wrote to Harcourt (December 13) that "Mr. G. is ready to grovel in the dust to bring about reunion, either from remorse at having divided the Party or because he feels time is against him." Harcourt himself at this moment thought reconciliation wholly delusive, and writing to Granville (December 14) said, "I feel confident that the motto of the Hartington-Chamberlain league is *delenda est Hawarden*, and that they will have peace at no price."

Then came the Churchill bolt and Chamberlain's speech. Harcourt was convinced of the latter's good faith, but Mr. Morley was suspicious. "Is J. Chamberlain simply foxing as he did all through the Session?" he asked Harcourt, to which the latter replied on Christmas Day :

. . . I am not such a suspicious character as you are, and I believe from whatever motive that he really desires a *modus vivendi* with his old friends and if that is really his wish we should be idiots to balk him. I have written to him a letter of satisfaction on his speech, and expressed a desire on my own part to co-operate in any reasonable plan of reunion. I have also offered to meet him in London if he wishes it. . . . There are only two people who can seriously affect the situation now. One is Chamberlain, the other is



Hartington. With the latter we can do nothing. "The former I think should be judiciously handled."

"Let us go in hot and strong for a compromise with our old friends and not mince matters too much if the thing can be done," he wrote next day to Mr. Morley. "After all the smash of a great party is a great evil and one which it is worth making some sacrifice to repair." And on the same day he wrote a long letter to Gladstone urging the acceptance of Chamberlain's olive branch, and discussing the sensational turn of events in the political world:

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

MALWOOD, *December 26*.— . . . You are charitable in your speculations on Randolph's motives. You will think me ill-natured if I quote the saying to me some weeks before the event of a good friend of his who told me R. had said, "There is no chance for any one in this country who does not give it a sensation once a month," and his friend added, "You will see he will do something startling in about a month"—and so he has with a vengeance. This taste for sensations grows like opium eating, and this has been a rattler. For himself I think he has made a great mistake. He has thrown away a bigger position than he will ever make.

When I saw him on his accession to office I said to him, "Whatever you do be orthodox and be economical. Those are the only two virtues of a Ch. of the Exch. . . ." I have always maintained that there never would be a chance for real economy till a Ch. of the Exch. did really resign on the Estimates. I was a little jealous of R. C., for he has taken the prize which, as you know, I very nearly won last March and thereby saved £3,000,000 out of the jaws of Ripon and C. Bannerman. But then I had the good fortune to have the Prime Minister on my side, which R. C. had not—and that makes a difference. . . .

Chamberlain's speech at all events shows that he is in no mind for a combination with Salisbury in any shape, and if he stands out there would be an end of the Liberal Unionists as a Party, which to us would be an immense gain apart from all other considerations. . . .

I am all for making the most of Chamberlain's advances, and from what J. Morley tells me the leader of the Irish Party is not in an unreasonable frame of mind, so that a *modus vivendi* may possibly be found. . . .

But Mr. Morley was still haunted by the suspicion that Chamberlain was "foxing." "The more I hear of things," he wrote to Harcourt (December 28), "the more do I stick

to the point that we ought to be in no hurry publicly to clasp the proffered hand of Chamberlain until we know what he really means." For that an interview between Harcourt and Chamberlain, he said, was indispensable.

The preparations for such a meeting were already in train. Harcourt, alone among the Gladstonians, had remained in close touch with Chamberlain. His letter to him on the Birmingham speech overflowed with enthusiasm and approval. "I am quite ready to carry my spade and mattock to the work," he said. Chamberlain was equally cordial in reply (December 26), and outlined his views, giving precedence to a strong Land Bill as the most urgent necessity, and saying that when he spoke of "three Liberals round a table" he had in mind Harcourt, Herschell and Fowler, as those who had done nothing to embitter differences and to whom he could submit his suggestions in detail. He did not contemplate complete personal reunion as the result of any conference. He expressed himself as bitterly wounded by the injustice and ingratitude of former associates and supporters, and said he felt a period of temporary effacement for himself necessary. Two letters to Harcourt followed next day from Jesse Collings and Dr. Dale of Birmingham. With surprising unanimity they disclaimed any communication with Chamberlain or any knowledge on his part of the overtures they were making. And with equally surprising unanimity they made identical proposals, based on the same facts—Churchill's resignation and Chamberlain's olive branch, the danger of a long Salisbury rule, the rejection of Home Rule by the country leading up to a reunion of Liberals on a common platform, "nobody wearing a white shirt."

Harcourt was in high spirits, and was convinced that everything was coming right. He sent Chamberlain's "Eirenikon" to Gladstone with his enthusiastic blessing, and received his approval of a conference, with reserves. Gladstone did not think the *modus vivendi* lay in the preliminary framing of a Land Bill, and the postponement to it of the question of social order in Ireland, but rather in ascertaining

whether, if Home Rule could not be had at once, there could be, "a measure worth Ireland's taking in the province of local government with the assent of the Liberals, the Nationalists and the dissentient Liberals. "I am going to pay him (Chamberlain) a harmless compliment in an article . . . in the January *Nineteenth Century*," he said. "I ought to have mentioned my opinion that Chamberlain, though his power of opposing and damaging in debate is great, has no large following to offer us nor one of which the quality would make up for defect in quantity." He recurred to this theme two days later when, writing to Harcourt, he said :

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN CASTLE, *December 29.*— . . . It occurred to me on reading Chamberlain that he had not sufficiently allowed for the dual nature of the question before him : 1. What is fit to be done ; 2. Who is to do it. On the whole I expect it will be found that the first question practically as well as logically is who are to be the Government.

I am in the pleasant troubles of a birthday, on which Chester reinforces the local P.O. with an extra clerk, and we send up a donkey cart to bring down the first delivery. It is well that my family is tolerably populous, or the business of opening could hardly have been managed. . . .

I am afraid Chamberlain falls into a mistake, the commonest of all mistakes in the Liberal Party ; namely the supposition that when the power to do harm is great there is a commensurate power to do good. Whereas the useful power is often not a tenth part of the evil one.

I am afraid I cannot stiffly contend for my hasty presumption about Randolph's conscience.

In the meantime Harcourt had left Malwood for London to meet Chamberlain. "Altogether," he wrote to Gladstone (December 29), "I consider the crisis as highly healthy in its developments. Randolph has extinguished himself, at least for the present. The Tories are very indignant with Salisbury for having despaired of going on without Hartington. Hartington is snubbed by the Tories, and the Coriolanus of Birmingham is in a melting mood. Considering what was the state of things a fortnight ago this is surely a great advance."

The meeting of Harcourt and Chamberlain took place at Harcourt's house in Grafton Street on December 30, and writing to Gladstone later in the day Harcourt, describing the interview, said :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

7, GRAFTON STREET, December 30.— . . . I insisted as an absolute preliminary that nothing should be done which should bear the appearance of an abandonment on our part of the principle of an Irish legislative body for Irish affairs as a part of the policy for the settlement of Ireland, leaving, however, absolutely open the discussion of the nature and attributions of that body. Chamberlain was, I think, rather anxious to have limited the discussion to *Land and Local Government*, but he yielded to my insistence on the third capital point. The matter stands thus. He proposes that a certain number amongst us should meet him to discuss—

- (1) Irish land.
- (2) Irish local government.
- (3) What form of Irish legislature could be adopted.

The names which have been suggested by Chamberlain are Herschell, John Morley, myself and H. Fowler. He desired to have Fowler as a financial expert on the land question. . . .

If we should fail to find a common ground we shall be no worse off than we are now. If we succeed we shall be in a much better plight. And in any case, by this evidence of mutual goodwill, we shall have extracted much of the personal venom out of the controversy.

I trust that this overture in principle may receive your sanction. Of course as far as we are concerned the whole discussion would be conducted under your auspices and instructions. . . .

Next day (December 31) there was a further meeting of the two, and a few passages from the Journal will convey the spirit of the negotiations at this critical moment :

December 31.—Chamberlain came at twelve. W. V. H. read over to him an extract from his (H.'s) letter to Gladstone last night, stating the terms of the arrangement, and Chamberlain tried once more to bolt from the Irish legislature clause, and wanted to substitute for it the words "legislative body or bodies." W. V. H. was very stiff, said it was impossible to alter that, and Chamberlain gave way.

W. V. H. pressed Chamberlain again to have some of his Unionist friends on the Committee, suggesting Trevelyan, and Chamberlain had to consent, though he said he thought they might with advantage have come in later, when perhaps some agreement had been already arrived at. He said he had very little hope of Hartington, who did

not at all approve of this idea of a Committee and told Chamberlain that he was putting himself in the hands of a lot of clever fellows with Gladstone at their back and that he would get the worst of it.

At one o'clock W. V. H. said he believed John Morley was at the Athenæum and would Chamberlain like to see him? C. hummed and hawed, said he had to lunch at Dilke's at two, and perhaps there was not time. I offered to go down in a cab to bring John Morley up, and he could not invent any other excuse, so I did so.

Morley has heard from Brett [Lord Esher] this morning that Chamberlain has been pressing Hartington to form a Coalition Government!

I brought Morley into the room and he met Chamberlain for the first time since the breach of their relations last May. They wished one another a happy New Year, and W. V. H. plunged in *medias res* so as to avoid any awkwardness. They were both very obviously shy of one another. Subject to Gladstone's approval the Committee is to meet on January 13 and 14, and Chamberlain is to come down to Malwood on the latter day.

Chamberlain and Morley went off in a cab together. Chamberlain asked Morley to go with him to Irving's box at the Lyceum to-night, and said, "Hang public opinion! Why should we not be seen together?" Morley had not given an answer, and wanted to know from W. V. H. whether he was to go or not. W. V. H. advised him to go. It was a great relief to W. V. H. that John Morley is going to be on the committee. . . . [H.]

Mr. Morley's suspicions were not removed. He desired reunion, but he had less confidence in Chamberlain's good intentions than Harcourt had, and when the latter wrote with furious anger against Labouchere's mischievous attempts to keep the wounds of the Party open, he replied:

95, ELM PARK GARDENS, January 3.—I don't think it will do at all to put down our foot on H. Labouchere. Personally he carries no weight, but what he says on this business is what all our staunchest friends are thinking. I am as anxious as you to make things easy for J. Chamberlain. But the chances are ten to one against *modus vivendi*, and then we shall want all our friends: don't let us damp their ardour in the meanwhile.

I doubt the expediency of turning on C. W. D. [Dilke]. He will trim the sails too much in the Birmingham direction, I think I will keep my own hand on the *D. N.* [*Daily News*] helm for a few days, if the giant who edits it will let me. . . .

"Oh thou of little faith!" replied Harcourt, "how troublesome you are with your suspicions. You even

attribute the same qualities to others without their deserving it." And he enclosed triumphantly a letter from Spencer welcoming the prospects of the Conference. Gladstone shared something of Mr. Morley's distrust. Churchill's resignation had left Chamberlain in a hole. "We stand midway in his estimation between the Government + Churchill and the Government - Churchill," he wrote to Harcourt. But he approved of the Conference, and at Harcourt's request he sent him an elaborate agenda for the proceedings, and telegraphed to him authority to use *ad libitum* his letter of December 27 as a public blessing on the coming event. Harcourt thereupon drafted a press *communiqué* which duly appeared. Everything seemed working for success. Goschen had joined the Government, and damned it in the sight of Chamberlain. The latter had now no companionship on the ministerial side, and, caught between two antagonisms, was disposed to make terms with that which seemed the less objectionable. The Gladstonians were anxious to welcome him, though with caution. "Do be more suspicious" was Mr. Morley's persistent warning. But Harcourt was bubbling over with faith in the honesty of everybody and with joy in the sudden change in the fortunes of the thing he cared for most, the Party. Writing to Gladstone he said :

MALWOOD, *January 3*.--- . . . I am extremely well satisfied with the issue of the crisis. I am very glad Goschen is to join the Government. ●

(1) Because he would never have been anything but a thorn in our side,

(2) Because it shuts the door in the face of Randolph,

(3) Because it secures the animosity of Chamberlain,

(4) Because it detaches him from Hartington,

(5) Because he will make a bad leader,

(6) Because he will make a good Chancellor of the Exchequer.

(You see I put that last.) Are these not six good reasons ?

Altogether the New Year opens upon us with far brighter prospects than we could have anticipated a few weeks ago. . . .

He was confident of success. "If there is a desire to agree," he wrote to Hartington's private secretary, "the

dullest men will find a way ; if there is not the cleverest fellows will fail. ' As we happen to be all very clever men sincerely anxious to agree, I expect we shall succeed, and the Liberal Party by penny subscriptions [an allusion to the gold wreath for Disraeli] will erect a statue to the peacemaker Randolph." He even had hopes of Hartington. He would come in late to the Conference as he came in late for dinner, he told Chamberlain. In a rickling New Year's letter to his oldest political friend, James, he said the Round Table would after the Conference go to Malwood, " where I hope you will one day sit at it to settle the details of Home Rule. Some 'earnest Liberals' have applied to take some of the furniture as mementoes. I think of cutting it up into 'chips' and selling them at Hawarden prices. . . . Good-bye, my dear old fellow, and good luck for '87. Let us both be happy in the belief that we are each right and both about to win."

Gladstone, like Mr. Morley, was still full of warnings of an ambush. When the preliminaries were arranged he wrote a cautionary letter to Harcourt in which he said :

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN, January 7.-- . . . In your conversation, you *three* will represent in one sense 280, and in a fuller sense say 195 votes. They *two* will represent six or eight ? The 195 with firm ground under their feet ; the six or eight (if they be so many) floating in the air. While we had better not (I suppose) blazon this inequality, it seems clear that we should say nothing which could seem to show we were not aware of it. . . .

Although one is apt to be too suspicious on these occasions, I think that in the notion of an Irish Local Government Bill, if to be proposed by us, *latet anguis in herba*. The danger would be the acceptance of a Bill which could be *taken for*, and yet did not really constitute a fulfilment of our pledge to Ireland. But I do not believe such a danger to be probable—only a thing that we should bear in mind. Chamberlain is under a great necessity of moving. We are not ! All our necessity is to avoid a reasonably founded charge of overlooking a pacific overture which might have been accepted without compromise of our policy.

Meanwhile the last obstacle to the meeting was removed by the consent of Chamberlain to the substitution of Sir

George Trevelyan for H. H. Fowler as his colleague at the deliberation.

## II

The Round Table Conference met at Harcourt's house, 7, Grafton Street, on January 13, those present, in addition to Harcourt, being Herschell (the Lord Chancellor), Mr. John Morley, Chamberlain and Sir George Trevelyan. The sitting lasted three hours, and was, by common consent, marked by cordial feeling and an unexpected measure of agreement of opinion. "Nothing could be better, more conciliatory or business-like than the tone of all concerned," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone. The discussion was resumed the following day at noon, and continued until three in the afternoon. There was to be no further meeting until Parliament met. In his letters (January 13 and 14) to Gladstone reporting the purport of the conversations, Harcourt said that Chamberlain first propounded a land scheme, well worthy of discussion and consideration, and having "the merit that it does not to any considerable extent pledge British credit or require the raising of large sums of money." From this they passed to local government, agreeing that the authorities should be popularly elected and "established in Ireland on the same principle as we contemplate in England." Then came the burning question of Home Rule :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

7, GRAFTON STREET, January 14.— . . . We started with the admitted basis that there should be a *legislative body* for Ireland with an *executive dependent* upon it for purely Irish affairs. Indeed the Leeds Resolution in principle was frankly adopted. It was thought convenient to discuss the matter with the Canadian constitution as a text. There seemed no difficulty upon any side in adopting the powers of the Provincial Legislatures in Canada as an *analogue* for Irish Home Rule, the Imperial Parliament and Government standing to this Irish legislature in the same relation as the Dominion Parliament to the Provincial legislatures. . . .

We found no difficulty in assigning to the provincial legislature of Ireland, education, public works and Local Government Board with a responsible executive to administer these departments.

There was considerable discussion as to the control of the police,



Chamberlain was willing to concede the local police to the Irish Government—Trevelyan demurred. We all concurred that there must be a police force (such as the Irish Constabulary) under the control of the Imperial Government to enforce the law so far as it was not within the province of the Irish authority.

We discussed, but did not determine the question of one or two chambers in the legislature.

We came to the conclusion that except for military organization and the Imperial police there would be no necessity for any British administrator located in Ireland, but that Irish business so far as it lay outside the powers of the Irish Government might be transacted by a department in London, i.e. a Secretary of State or other official.

We discussed but did not determine how far (such a Legislature being established in Ireland) the Irish members should sit and vote at Westminster. Opinions did not run very strong either way on this point.

The last and most difficult question was raised by Chamberlain at the close of the meeting. He insisted *very strongly* on the danger and impolicy of forcing "Protestant Ulster" into the arrangement against its will, and urged a separate system for Ulster. I argued the great difficulty of establishing such a separation, and we left this question over for further consideration.

I think you will be of opinion that in these two meetings we have made very substantial progress. We have obtained the admission of all the *principles* for which we have contended.

(1) That there is to be a Land Bill which is to transfer the land to the tenant making an *Irish local authority* responsible for collecting and paying the equivalent of the rent to the landlord.

(2) That there is to be a *provincial Irish Legislature* with an *Irish Executive* for the transaction of such Irish business as Parliament shall determine, this business being in fact all Irish local affairs, due security being taken that their powers are not exceeded and that the authority of the Imperial Government in matters not transferred shall be respected and enforced.

There seemed ample ground for Harcourt's cheerfulness. In so far as there had been disagreement, Sir George Trevelyan had appeared more "recalcitrant" than Chamberlain. But Mr. Morley's suspicions persisted, and the Journal (January 14) records that he told Harcourt that "Chamberlain means to 'bolt' on the Ulster question, and break off on that when he wants an excuse." But for the moment all the omens were with Harcourt. Next day Chamberlain and his son, Austen, went to "Malwood to spend the week-end with Harcourt. The conversations

were resumed in the most amiable spirit, and Harcourt communicated the result of them to Mr. Morley (then on a visit to Sandringham) in a letter which is given at length in Appendix I. Gladstone was cordial, but cautious in his reply to Harcourt's record of the Conference. "It is a great point gained," he wrote (January 16), "if Chamberlain accepts in terms a Statutory Parliament for Ireland with a responsible executive (I set Ulster aside for the moment). Then as to conferring powers (instead of excepting subjects as we did), in a very able speech Sir C. Russell recently said this was a question of drafting. I hope it may be. But does Chamberlain think it so? I hardly dare as yet to suppose it, for your letter speaks of 'such Irish business as Parliament shall determine' and goes on to say 'this business being in fact all Irish local affairs.' The comment here goes to the quick of the text. . . ." In spite of Harcourt's enthusiastic letter on the conversations at Malwood, Mr. Morley remained vigilant and distrustful. He was against any premature publication of the banns, until they saw what Chamberlain said at Hawick. As to Harcourt's statement that Chamberlain was not solicitous for his own position in the affair, Mr. Morley said (January 18), "I am utterly and incorrigibly incredulous. He has found out that his egotism, irascibility and perversity have landed him in a vile mess. Those noble qualities are only scotched, not killed. He has proved himself to have no wisdom and no temper. Never more let me be asked to believe in his statesmanship. *C'est fini*. . . ." "To my mind," replied Harcourt (January 19), "the least hopeful part of our business consists in your incurable inveteracy against J. C. I believe it to be unjust, but I despair of the task of convincing you of it."

In the Hawick speech (January 24) Chamberlain, apart from an attack on "the noisy ranters who have obtained a temporary popularity by abusing us," showed no disposition to break up the Conference, and Harcourt sent him his congratulations, and the assurance that "the Old Man is friendly." He protested, however, against the

bitterness of his references to the Irish, to which Chamberlain replied :

*January 25.*— . . . As to the Irish, please bear in mind that I am only human. The brutes have been abusing and insulting me up to the very last moment, and nothing will induce me to turn the other cheek to the smiter. If you want me to be civil to them, you must bring pressure to bear on them to treat me with ordinary courtesy.

During the following week the prospects of reunion improved with the defeat of Goschen in the Exchange division of Liverpool, in reference to which the Journal records :

*January 26.*—Goschen defeated by eleven at Liverpool. W. V. H. had been dining with E. Hamilton at Brooks's to meet Gladstone, John Morley, Sir R. Welby, Sir A. West and some others. Gladstone had gone home before the news came. W. V. H. said the excitement was tremendous and the exultation of the Treasury officials passed belief. J. Morley was triumphant, but regarded it only in the light of the effect it would have on Chamberlain. He said to W. V. H., " You have let him out of the trap just in time ; if he had not had a helping hand from you he would not have got out of it after Liverpool." W. V. H. replied, " He is a useful hound in the pack and worth letting out of a trap." They went on to the Cosmopolitan afterwards, and triumphed over the Unionists there. [H.]

Gladstone, after the Hawick speech, was noticeably warmer in regard to Chamberlain, told Harcourt (January 29) that a real and considerable advance had been made, " for which we have to thank (especially) you," and thought Chamberlain's ideas on land presented " points of great encouragement."

But while Gladstone was writing this letter, Chamberlain was making another speech, this time at Birmingham, in which he attacked the Gladstonians for being " hand-in-glove with their revilers." It was the temper more than the matter of the speech, which went far in the direction of Home Rule, which was disruptive ; but the effect was bad. Even Harcourt's obstinate optimism began to fail. Mr. Morley wrote to him :

95, ELM PARK GARDENS, S.W., *January 31.* . . . Indeed, I do not see how, if we had been in the full heat of controversy, he could

have taken a more unfriendly line than that which marks the speech from first to last. It seems to me to indicate a peculiar want of loyalty to the idea of the Conference, though he had himself prepared it. Whoever heard of one of the parties to a friendly discussion of this kind, with the aim of practical co-operation at the end of it, going out at intervals to fire broadsides into those whom he has just left? I say nothing of the good taste or of the good feeling of such a course. . . . In face of discouraging evidence like this of the frame of mind of our partner at the Round Table, I think we shall really have to consider whether it is worth while to persevere. What do you say?

The question was discussed by Harcourt in a letter to Gladstone, who was at Cambridge (February 1), in which he admitted that though not unsatisfactory in substance the "extremely offensive language towards the whole body of Gladstonian Liberals (as he termed them)" had created "the worst possible feeling amongst our friends." But he urged that a public breaking off of the Conference at that moment would be a very great misfortune, and he asked Gladstone to meet him and Mr. Morley in London on his journey back to Hawarden to decide whether the Conference should go on. Gladstone's reply miscarried, and he missed Harcourt in London, where he waited for him at Euston. From thence he wrote him (February 2) a letter advising no formal break off of the Conference, but adding his opinion that "in no case should signal or telling good have proceeded from any conclusion of an alliance with Chamberlain at this moment." "My feeling has always been," he wrote the next day from Hawarden, "that the battle was for the present mainly out of our hands, but that it would be fought *for us* partly by experience of Ireland and partly by the proposals and errors of the Government."

No retort was made upon Chamberlain's speech, and Mr. Morley, who spoke at Newcastle on February 9, adopted a conciliatory tone, his only oblique allusion to the Chamberlain speech being the following gentle rebuke:

. . . The chairman referred to a Canadian settlement. Now I am one of those who think that if you are in a conference there is

some delicacy in treating in public matters which are there dealt with more or less privately. It is a matter of taste and good feeling, but that is the way in which my taste and my good feeling point.

It was a mild form of retaliation, but Chamberlain's amazingly thin skin was penetrated, and he exploded in a letter to Harcourt :

40, PRINCE'S GARDENS, *February 10.*— . . . You will not be surprised to hear that the tone of Morley's speech at Newcastle is personally most offensive to me. However, I do not intend to allow private feeling to interfere with negotiations which have been dictated by considerations of public policy, and I shall say no more on the subject either to you or to him, although I reserve my right to make a full public reply at the first convenient opportunity. . . .

The prospects of a formal resumption of the Conference were fading, but a conversation between Chamberlain and Harcourt encouraged the latter in collaboration with Sir George Trevelyan to make one more attempt to keep it in being, and Sir George Trevelyan issued invitations for a dinner of the five at his house, 8, Grosvenor Crescent, on February 14. It began inauspiciously. "Trevelyan told W. V. H.," says the *Journal*, "that just before the dinner Chamberlain had come in and used such violent language about John Morley that he, Trevelyan, thought there would be a personal altercation when they met, and indeed Chamberlain was so cold and almost insulting to Morley that Trevelyan thought the latter would have left the house." At this critical moment, however, Harcourt arrived wearing an enormous orchid, which his son had secured for his buttonhole. There was a burst of laughter at the apparition, and Harcourt, with mock solemnity, said, "When the ambassadors of the contending powers meet it is the custom of the plenipotentiaries to wear the favour of the opposing sovereigns." The jest warmed the atmosphere and the dinner passed off with so much success that the formal resumption of the Conference seemed possible. But it was a fleeting hope. Meeting Lewis Harcourt at Lady Dorothy Nevill's a few days later, Chamberlain said he had written "a letter on disestab-

lishment in poor little Wales which will make your hair curl." The letter, which was written for *The Baptist*, was reproduced in the daily press on February 25, and blew the Conference out of the water. Under the disguise of a plea for Welsh disestablishment, Chamberlain turned with unbridled fury upon Gladstone's policy as the obstacle to the satisfaction of the claims of Welsh Nonconformists, Scottish crofters and English agricultural labourers. One passage will serve to indicate its temper :

. . . Thirty-two millions of people must go without much needed legislation because three million are disloyal, while nearly 600 members of the Imperial Parliament will be reduced to forced inactivity because some eighty delegates representing the policy and receiving the pay of the Chicago Convention, are determined to obstruct all business until their demands have been conceded. . . .

The blow was well timed. Gladstone had just returned to England, and, Harcourt having laid the whole position before him, he had arranged to draw up a memorandum on the points agreed on which might be submitted to the Conference. But on reading Chamberlain's article, he wrote to Harcourt (February 25 and 26) that in view of this "denunciation of the policy and the proposals in the mass" the intention must be abandoned for the moment, though he hoped that the ground gained would not be wholly lost. "I hope," he said, "he [Chamberlain] will know, in order to do you justice, that you have been fighting his battle among your colleagues and striving to obtain for him favourable construction and the fullest fair-play." Harcourt's patience was at last exhausted. In a letter to Chamberlain he said :

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

7, GRAFTON STREET, February 25.—. . . The whole of your article might be condensed into a single sentence, "Gentlemen, if you will only pronounce that from first to last Mr. Chamberlain has been wholly in the right and Mr. Gladstone mischievously in the wrong then you may have disestablishment or anything you please, but until you humiliate Mr. Gladstone and place Mr. Chamberlain on the pinnacle which is his due neither your objects nor any other Liberal measures shall be allowed to advance." That is the sum and substance of the argument couched in language of the most irritating

character.' I need hardly tell you that so long as this tone is adopted by you in public, no amount of private negotiation can be of any avail. Our friends, if they suspected us of treating on such a basis, would naturally regard us as thoroughly disloyal to Mr. Gladstone and the principles we have professed. . . .

I cannot say how much I regret all this. I feel that we are engaged in the work of Sisyphus. As soon as we have with great labour rolled the stone up the hill, you in an outburst of temper dash it down again to the bottom.

You complain of the bitterness displayed against you, but I wish sometimes you would consider how much you do to provoke it, and I fear this last performance will greatly aggravate the feeling against you.

I am afraid you may resent this letter, but I am conscious of having played quite fairly by you, and I should do no good unless I spoke my mind plainly and frankly as to proceedings which can only wreck the objects you profess to have at heart. . . .

*Chamberlain to Harcourt.*

HIGHBURY, BIRMINGHAM, *February 26.*— . . . I thank you for writing so plainly. I will do the same. I agree with you that our task is almost impossible—there is so much sensitiveness and feeling *on both sides* that the difficulties are nearly insurmountable.

You seem to think that I am bound, while negotiation is still incomplete, to take no notice whatever of all that is offensive and objectionable to me in the communications that proceed from leading Gladstonians, and that I am to pass over in silence their repeated asseverations that no change—no concession of any kind is to be made by them, and that I am only to be allowed to come back as they say after sufficient and complete acts of submission and penitence. But I do not found myself only on the speeches of such men as Stansfeld, Campbell-Bannerman and Sir C. Russell, although the tone of these speeches is disagreeable in the highest degree. Neither will I refer again to the outrageous attack made upon me by J. Morley at Newcastle—nor to the general line of the organ of the Party—the *Daily News*—but I must advert to the language used in recent letters and speeches by Mr. Gladstone himself.

When in Wales he took more than one opportunity of nailing his flag to the mast. Every one who reads his recent letters must draw the inference that he adheres to the whole of the policy to which I and other Liberals objected, and that he is not prepared to make the slightest concession. The effect of these statements has been very marked. It is said in the Liberal papers, without exception, that as Mr. Gladstone has declared that he will not give way, the only chance of reunion must lie in my "caving in," and that this is what I am now doing. To use the words of J. Morley's organ at Newcastle, I am "furtively preparing for surrender."

From first to last there has never been the slightest indication on the part of any Gladstonian of an intention to make the slightest concession of any kind in order to meet the advances which I have openly made. . . .

I consider the present situation very grave. Never has party feeling run higher, and a large section of politicians are apparently willing to run any risks, and accept any policy which can embarrass their opponents and make the government of the country impossible. I have no sympathy with these tactics, and if the future programme of the Liberal Party is to include plans of campaign, obstruction and Heaven knows how many wild theories of revenge or destruction, I must stand aside or join to resist them. . . .

In any case let us remain friends—even if it is out of the question that we should be allies.

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

7, GRAFTON STREET, February 26.— . . . The flood tide of what seems to me a very just indignation at the manner in which you have treated Mr. Gladstone and his friends in the midst of what were supposed to be friendly negotiations is running too high at this moment to make it possible to stem it. We must therefore take time to consider what can be done to repair the mischief you have wrought. I will see you on this subject when you return to London. Mr. Gladstone, who is really the most placable of men, writes to me to-day a letter, which I will read to you: entirely free from all soreness or bitterness at your treatment of him (a thing we feel much more strongly than he does), but full of regret at the “unexpected obstacle in the way of any attempt at this moment to sum up the results of your communications, which we should otherwise hopefully have done.” He adds that he is “unwilling that so much ground apparently gained should be lost,” and he hopes that something may be done to avert such a result. I concur in that hope, but I cannot but feel that it is quite hopeless to expect that any good shall be done if we are to have our noses pulled in public at the time when we receive the strongest assurances of goodwill in private, and if the statements made out of doors are to be in flat contradiction to the representations held out to us at the Conference.

I learned with great surprise that Hartington had derived from you the belief that the question of an Irish legislature and a responsible Government had never been entertained by the Conference, and that you and we had never agreed to anything but a strictly *municipal Government*.

It is a very bad job, and I wish I saw my way out of it. . . .

*Chamberlain to Harcourt.*

HIGHBURY, February 27.—You are quite wrong about Hartington as I could prove to you in two minutes if it were worth while. But



is it worth while? Your lecture this morning has pretty well completed the work which your lecture of yesterday commenced, and if it is your intention to abandon the Conference and the hopes raised by it, I shall receive your decision with something approaching a sense of relief. . . .

There has been not the slightest consideration for my position, and apparently I have been expected to make all the sacrifices and to receive nothing in return. . . .

I will only add that if it be, as I understand it is, your intention to bring negotiations to a close, I hope we may be able to agree on the form in which this decision is to be announced.

It is, of course, clearly understood that the proceedings of the Conference will remain secret, and that both sides are perfectly free to pursue any policy they may see fit in the future, and are not to be held committed by anything that has passed in confidential-intercourse.

I am afraid that the political future is very dark, but the responsibility does not rest with me.

The correspondence continued at inordinate length, Harcourt countering Chamberlain's suggestion that he and his friends had broken up the Conference by insisting that he and Chamberlain should maintain contact on the subject. Referring in one of his letters (March 1) to Chamberlain's excessive sensitiveness to what the papers said, he remarked :

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

March 1.— . . . As to the London correspondent of the Newcastle paper I pay no attention to what he says. That J. Morley has many friends and admirers who look forward to his eventually taking the first place in the Liberal Party I have no doubt is perfectly true, and seems to me quite natural. I dare say they would prefer him to either you or myself, and it is certainly not for me to say that they are wrong. For my part I have no desire to force myself into any position which is not voluntarily accorded, and I have no views whatever except to do for the time being what may appear most advantageous to the Party to which I belong. No newspaper correspondence or lobby gossip will induce me to suspect J. Morley of any underhand proceedings either towards myself or any one else. His good faith is transparent, and he appears to me always to be the soul of honour. If he has any defect in the high position he occupies in the Party it appears to me to be a somewhat excessive distrust of his own powers and claims, and I never saw a man less disposed to be jealous of others or egotistically eager to urge his own pretensions.

He desired me last of all distinctly to assure you with reference to

the article of the Newcastle Correspondent to which you referred so pointedly at Trevelyan's, and to which you again revert in your letter of to-day, that he knows nothing whatever of it, that he did not inspire it and that he had not even read it. When he says that you know as well as I do that it is true. . . .

He tells me that he is in no way responsible for any inspiration of the Newcastle paper.

Having said this I should be very glad if you would in like manner place me in a position to assure him and his friends that you were not in any way privy to the communication which appeared some days ago in the *Birmingham Post* on the subject of the Conference, and which contained a bitter personal attack on J. Morley contrasting his conduct very unfavourably with that of his colleagues at the Round Table. I now should be pleased to have your authority to remove the painful impression which your supposed sympathy with the language of that communication has produced upon many of Morley's friends.

Chamberlain left this question, with others, to be answered when "we met again." Into the interminable controversies that ensued I do not propose to enter at length. There are piles of letters and documents and speeches before me which it has been my duty to wade through, but which the reader will be glad to be spared. It is enough to say that having torpedoed the Conference, Chamberlain sought to put the Liberals in the position of refusing to proceed with it. This aim was defeated by the action of his colleague in the Conference, Sir George Trevelyan, who was so convinced that the meetings had disclosed a sufficient basis of agreement and that Chamberlain's action had destroyed a reasonable chance of reunion that he separated himself from the dissentient Liberals, and in July appeared in the field as Liberal candidate for the Bridgeton division of Glasgow. The circumstance evoked a new war of words as to who broke up the Conference, Sir George's Unionist opponent, Evelyn Ashley, stating Chamberlain's case with Chamberlain's authority, and Sir George telling his own experience of the Conference. Harcourt replied to Ashley at a meeting at Chelmsford on July 27, and Chamberlain intervened in the controversy with a long letter to *The Times* in which he charged his opponents with using the *Baptist* letter as a pretext for breaking off

the negotiations. There was correspondence on the question of publishing the records of the Conference, but the subject died down with the victory of Sir George Trevelyan, only to be revived by Chamberlain in the course of a campaign in Scotland in January 1889. Thereupon Harcourt delivered a speech at Derby on February 27, 1889, in which he incorporated a statement of the facts of the origin, course and breakdown of the Conference, which had been submitted to and endorsed by Mr. Morley and Sir George Trevelyan (Herschell was at the time abroad and inaccessible). That statement stands as the final and unchallenged record of the episode. It does not call for reproduction here, for it goes over the ground already covered in detail. Whether, as Mr. Morley suspected from the beginning, Chamberlain was "foxing" throughout must be left to the judgment of the reader, but that he broke up the Conference is a fact that does not admit of reasonable controversy. It would be idle to discuss his motives. They are perplexing but fairly apparent from any intelligent reading of the documents. Nor need the consequences be enlarged on. They also are apparent in the prolongation and embitterment of an historic struggle, and in the elevation of the Radical Mayor of Birmingham to the seat left vacant by Beaconsfield as the high priest of the Imperialists.

## CHAPTER III

### PARNELLISM AND CRIME

The Cowper Commission—Mr. Balfour as Chief Secretary—The new Crimes Bill—A scene in the House—"Parnellism and Crime"—Harcourt at Shoreditch—Proclamation of the National League—Mitchelstown—Harcourt's autumn campaign.

WHILE the incident of the Round Table was in progress behind the scenes, the new Government were preparing for that "twenty years of resolute government" which was the Salisbury alternative to conciliation. The path had been smoothed by the political suicide of Churchill and the advent of Goschen, who represented the official association of the Hartington group with the Ministry. This sudden clearing of the ministerial sky was qualified by an event which created a bad public impression. Lord Iddesleigh (Stafford Northcote) had been removed from the Foreign Office, which Salisbury took over, and the sense that he, "the worthiest of them all," as Harcourt wrote to Gladstone, had received "scurvy usage"—he was said to have first learned of the change through the Press—was sharpened by his death immediately after (January 12) while engaged in an interview with his successor. "This is a very shocking event, happening under very shocking circumstances," wrote Harcourt to his wife. It threw its shadows over the new Parliament which met on January 27. The Session, unparalleled in living memory for the intensity of the passions aroused and for the sensational episode that makes it memorable, was dominated from the first day to the last by the great issue that had so long perplexed British politics. On the one side was a Government committed to governing

Ireland by force ; on the other, an Opposition committed to governing Ireland by consent. It was an unprecedented situation which offered no ground for compromise, and the struggle moved forward with the bitterness of a death-grapple.

The immediate subject of attack was the Plan of Campaign. This new phase of the agrarian war in Ireland had been attended with extraordinary success. That there was substantial ground for it was beyond dispute. The Cowper Commission in February admitted that the grievances were real and that they were due to the exactions of the landlords, the fall in prices, the restriction of credit by the banks and other conditions which made the payment of rents impossible. The new Under Secretary for Ireland, Sir Redvers Buller, himself declared that the tenants' case was unanswerable. " You have got an ignorant poor people," he said, " and the law should look after them, instead of which it has only looked after the rich." The reasonable demand that evictions should be suspended until rents were revised had been thrust aside, and in one case in which Buller had reported that the tenants were nearer famine than paying rent the wretched people were ruthlessly evicted. The Government had determined on their course, and were not to be deflected from it by the evidence of their own official. Parnell's amendment to the Address—the discussion on which had culminated in a bitter attack by Hicks-Beach, the Irish Secretary, on Harcourt, whom he accused of taking " so complete a bath in Parnellite juice that he had not only changed his principles but had forgotten those he formerly held "—was defeated, and on the same day the Plan of Campaign was declared illegal by the Courts.

The policy was fully revealed with the advent in March of Mr. A. J. Balfour to the office of Chief Secretary in succession to Hicks-Beach. He immediately introduced a ruthless Coercion Bill, which, more drastic in its provisions than previous Crimes Acts, proposed to bring prisoners accused of aggravated offences from Ireland for trial in

London, and to make coercion no longer subject to a time limit, but the permanent instrument of government. Crime ceased to have a fixed meaning so far as Ireland was concerned ; it could cover anything that the Minister of the moment chose to bring within its scope. Simultaneously with this savage measure of repression, the Government introduced in the House of Lords a Land Bill. The revision of rents was originally excluded, but in the end the Government were compelled to make the Bill provide the very relief—powers to the land courts to cut down judicial rents for three years—which had been refused the previous autumn by the rejection of Parnell's Bill.

Into the struggle that raged around this secondary theme, it is impossible to enter in detail. It was marked by surprising confusion on the part of the Government. They persisted at first in their refusal to interfere with judicial rents because prices had fallen on the ground that this, in the words of Salisbury, would be to "lay your axe to the root of the fabric of civilized society." But under the pressure from Ulster and the influence of Chamberlain and Churchill they modified their opinion, only to recant at the anger of the landlords, and to recant again when the Ulster tenants' indignation threatened them with the loss of that province to the Unionist cause. So the struggle went forward, and in the end the Government conceded much what Parnell had asked for the year before, and the concession of which then, as Harcourt pointed out, would have made coercion unnecessary.

But all this was subsidiary to the fierce battle that occupied the centre of the stage. Relief to the impoverished tenants was to come too late, and meanwhile the threat of "resolute government" for all time was over them.

Gladstone desired Harcourt to move the amendment on W. H. Smith's motion for urgency for the new Crimes Bill ; but Harcourt strongly urged that the first formal attack should be made by Mr. Morley, who agreed with him on the ground, as he wrote to Harcourt (March 15), that it would leave the duty of "replying to Hartington

or J. C. [Chamberlain] to you, who are a "very powerful debater, instead of to me, who am a "very unhandy debater." This debate, in which Harcourt replied not to Hartington or Chamberlain, but to his old friend James, developed strong feeling on both sides. The discussion on Mr. Balfour's introduction of the Bill lasted five days, culminating in a scene of much uproar, when on April 1 W. H. Smith, the leader of the House, intimated that he would ask the House to accept or reject the first reading that night. Harcourt said this "openly assumed" that Smith had got the Speaker's leave to move the closure. The Speaker protested against what he described as an unworthy and untrue insinuation of previous communication between himself and Smith. Harcourt disavowed the intention, but when, later, on a motion for adjournment, Smith moved that the question be now put, the Speaker, without a moment's hesitation, assented and the division was taken. A scene, new to Parliament, followed, which has been described by one who took part in it :

When the figures were announced Gladstone rose from his seat, and with an air of great dignity walked slowly past the Chair and out of the House, accompanied by Harcourt and Morley. Stillness fell over the House for a moment, but soon the Radicals understood the movement. Parnell rose, and followed by the Irishmen, marched out at the door facing the Speaker, while the Radicals crowded indiscriminately out by all the doors. We left behind only the Tories and the Unionists. I cast a glance at Chamberlain as I passed out ; he was very pale and had a dazed look.

## II

It was the prelude to the fiercest conflict in the annals of Parliament. Outside the House, public feeling was inflamed by a series of articles entitled "Parnellism and Crime," which were appearing in *The Times*, and the purpose of which was to show that the Parnellite Party were hand-in-glove with the physical force movement. In his speech in the second reading debate, delivered on April 15, Harcourt denounced *The Times* articles as "rubbish." \* He spoke at great length, exposing afresh the Conservative overtures

to Parnell, pointing out that the real object of the Bill was to prevent legitimate combinations among the Irish tenants for protection against excessive rents, reminding James of the fight they had put up together in former days against the judge-made law which had at one time made combinations of working men illegal, and contending that a perpetual Coercion Act was a fundamental breach of the Union, which had been based on the condition that England and Ireland should have equal laws and privileges.

Into an atmosphere charged with explosive elements, *The Times* three days later flung the famous accusation to which its previous articles had been a skilful introduction. The moment was carefully chosen. The division on the second reading of the Bill was fixed for Monday, April 18, and on the morning of that day appeared the instalment of "Parnellism and Crime" which contained the following letter, dated May 15, 1882, and addressed, according to the bold surmise of *The Times*, to Patrick Egan the dynamitard :

DEAR SIR,—I am not surprised at your friend's anger, but he and you should know that to denounce the murders was the only course open to us. To do that promptly was plainly [an erasure here] our best policy.

But you can tell him and all others concerned that though I regret the accident of Lord F. Cavendish's death, I cannot refuse to admit that Burke got no more than his deserts.

You are at liberty to show him this, and others whom you can trust also, but let not my address be known. He can write to House of Commons.

The letter was signed "Yours very truly, Charles S. Parnell," and *The Times*, after admitting that the body of the MS. was apparently not in Parnell's handwriting, declared that "the signature and the 'Yours very truly' unquestionably are so." It was a staggering blow. It made the Opposition reel, and the Government ranks burst into triumphant cheers. Salisbury himself accepted the authenticity of the letter without question, and denounced Gladstone for his association with a man "tainted with the strong presumption of conniving at assassination." The authority of the great journal that had made itself responsible for



the accusation carried conviction even among many of those to whom 'the revelation was painful' and, although Parnell himself, in the House that afternoon, disclaimed the latter as "a villainous and barefaced forgery," his denial was useless against the wave of anger that submerged public opinion.

In that wave the Crimes Bill was caught and 'swept forward with increasing momentum. Harcourt, unlike Chamberlain and Mr. Morley, had never had any dealings with Parnell. He disliked the cold temperament of the man, and while at the Home Office had discovered the secret about him which was destined later to destroy him. But he discredited *The Times* disclosure from the moment it was made, and two days afterwards at a meeting at Shoreditch declared that he accepted Parnell's denial, adding that *The Times* had not produced any proof of the authenticity of the document, had not stated where it came from or where they had obtained it, but had said to Parnell, "You are to prove that it is not true." It was a reversal of the ordinary principles of English justice. He dismissed the statement made in the Press that the facsimile letter of *The Times* had actually been seized and lodged in the Home Office when he was Home Secretary as "a deliberate and malignant fabrication," and confirmed Lord Spencer's assertion that in his experience there had never been any evidence of the complicity of the Irish members with crime in Ireland. In the House, where the Government were suggesting that Parnell's remedy was by legal process, Harcourt insisted that the proposal was a sham, for a prosecution for a political libel would certainly fail. A breach of privilege had been committed, and he contended that it was for the House to decide whether a *prima facie* case of breach of privilege was made out. Members were entitled to protection, and he protested against the withholding of protection for the first time when an Irish member was concerned. Defeated in the House, he carried the demand for fair play into the country. At Southampton on May 4 he said the Liberals had asked for a Committee of

Privilege on the question. He asserted that if such a demand had been made under similar circumstances by any member not an Irish member, it would have been granted. But the Irishmen were offered a substitute. The Government offered to Mr. Dillon and his colleagues that their honour should be "vindicated by the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster." It reminded him of the nursery story of Red Riding Hood. And in a speech at the National Liberal Club (July 18) he declared that nothing had discredited the Government and the Unionist Party more than "the base and baseless attempt to calumniate and vilify the Irish Party."

. . . The real truth (he said) is that the people of this country are a fair and a generous people, and they do not understand a system of forged letters and calumnies like that which the Government in the House of Commons have used their influence to prevent being fairly met by the Irish members as they offered to do.

Meanwhile the struggle in the House, now intensified by the passions awakened by *The Times* revelations, went forward day by day, the main burden of it falling on the shoulders of Harcourt, whose Homeric duels with Balfour and especially with Goschen made the rafters ring and filled the Press Gallery with the joy of good "copy." Most memorable perhaps was his "dance of death" speech (July 4) in reply to Goschen's "insulting" attack on Gladstone. "You have gone from this bench as a deserter," cried Harcourt, "and we will take care you don't return to it as a spy." But Providence was on the side of the big battalions, and stage by stage the Bill progressed. It passed into law on July 24, and following a visit of Michael Davitt to Bodyke, the scene of the evictions on the O'Callaghan estate, the Government put the second clause of the Act in operation, and proclaimed the National League on August 19.

This drastic act of war shocked even Chamberlain. His old repugnance to coercion flashed up for a moment, and he declared in the country that he had made strong representations to the Government on the subject. "Chamberlain

informs me that he will vote and speak against the Proclamation," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone (August 19).<sup>1</sup> "He seems to have split very much away from Hartington. I think it is of the highest importance *that you should yourself make the motion against the Proclamation*. Chamberlain said to me it would be much easier for him to support the motion if made by you than if it came from Parnell direct." Gladstone did so, and in the division, on which the Government majority fell to 78, Chamberlain and his immediate Birmingham following voted in the minority. In a speech at Reading Harcourt made excellent play with this momentary recantation. "I am glad there is so much of the old leaven left," he said. "I am glad so much of the scent of the rose clings round the briars of Birmingham politics." But what a position it was; he had approved the Coercion Act, and now did not like to see it put in execution. It was idle to put a man in a cage with a tiger and then to advise the tiger to leave him alone. The National League had been the only obstacle to the exaction of exorbitant rents in Ireland. As Buller had said the tenants looked to the League as their salvation. Now they were left helpless to the rapacity of the landlords.

In Ireland the flames leaped higher. Following the prosecution of Mr. William O'Brien and Mr. J. Mandeville at Mitchelstown, Co. Cork, on September 9, a great meeting at which Mr. John Dillon and Labouchere were present was held in front of the Court House. A Government reporter with a police escort tried to force his way through the crowd. They were driven off, returned to the barracks, and when under cover fired a volley upon the people, in cold blood according to Labouchere, in self-defence according to the police. Three people were killed, and the coroner's jury returned a verdict of wilful murder against the police.

<sup>1</sup> At this time Chamberlain was in correspondence with Hartington. The victory of Sir George Trevelyan at Bridgeton had just occurred, and he urged Hartington to consider a scheme of Home Rule. Hartington turned the proposal down on the ground that it would break up the Unionist alliance. See Bernard Holland, *Life of the Duke of Devonshire*.

But no steps either of inquiry or reparation were taken by the Government, and "Remember Mitchelstown!" became the new battle-cry of the struggle. Gladstone, who was at Hawarden, had wanted Harcourt to lead the case against the Proclamation. "There is not go enough in me nor memory," he wrote (September 6). But in the light of this new Peterloo, Harcourt urged Gladstone to intervene. The debate was one of the most memorable events of a passionate time. Harcourt opened it (September 12) with a semi-legal disquisition on freedom of speech, the note of which was "I claim the right for any meeting, whether in Ireland or England, to denounce the Executive Government. I claim the right for any public meeting to denounce the action of the Legislature." But argument was in vain. Mr. Balfour accepted the statement of the police in their own cause as final, and, in the words of Mr. John Morley, "the slaughter of the three men was finally left just as if it had been the slaughter of three dogs."

## III

The close of the Session left Harcourt free to turn his attention to the country in a double sense. His autumn holidays in Scotland, stalking deer with Millais and James and yachting among the Hebrides, were over. The New Forest had become his sufficient playground, and all his spare time was devoted to the garden and the farming operations at Malwood. But "the country" had a political meaning that interfered with these agreeable occupations, and during the autumn he carried out a formidable campaign from Penrith to Lewes on the issue which had now obliterated all other public questions. His work during the Session had greatly enhanced his prestige, and, Gladstone excepted, he had no rival as a platform speaker. The fierce anger that was directed against him by Government speakers and in the Unionist Press—an anger due as much to his powerful gifts of argument and satire as to his own combative manner<sup>2</sup>—aroused an equal enthusiasm for him among his followers, and his autumn campaign this year had a

permanent influence in clarifying public thought and habituating the public mind to the idea of a new attitude towards Ireland. In his speeches he touched every phase of the issue, and anticipated most of the considerations that played so large a part thirty years later in the final controversy on the subject. Thus, speaking at Gloucester (December 20), he said, "I desire Home Rule for many reasons, but for no reason more than that it will reconcile to this country the great Irish population which forms so large a portion of the great American Republic." And at Penrith (November 23) he gave, by anticipation, the answer to the fallacy, so dear to Mr. Lloyd George at one period, that the Irish case was on all fours with the case of the seceding States at the time of the American Civil War :

. . . . The Northern States did not go to war with the South because the South claimed Home Rule. The Southern States had Home Rule, and had no need to fight for it . . . the meaning of Home Rule being that each community should have its own legislature, its own executive for the management of its own affairs. . . . The Northern States went to war with the South not because the South were fighting for Home Rule—they had got Home Rule—but because the Southern States were fighting for independence and in order to maintain slavery. That is what the Northern States were fighting for. . . . I did what I could to support the Northern States at that time and to save England from the greatest of all crimes in allying itself with Southern slavery at that period.

In another speech (at Lewes, September 23) he dealt with the wastefulness of the policy of oppression. "I wish he [Churchill] would turn his economical thoughts to Ireland. Why, in Ireland, you are maintaining at the cost of millions of money an army such as would be sufficient to conquer a foreign enemy. You are maintaining a military force under the name of the Royal Irish Constabulary; and if Lord Randolph Churchill wants efficient economy I will tell him how to save four millions a year, and that is by giving peace to Ireland." And at Portsmouth (October 27) he returned to the shame and danger of a police employed to suppress "not crime but opinion." Churchill had made the mischievous suggestion that there was some divine

right possessed by the constable. It was because the police in England so clearly understood that they had no power to do more than carry out the law that they were more respected and liked in England than in most other countries. "Once preach to the police this doctrine of unlimited power, once egg them on to unnecessary violence and harshness, and they will become the object of the aversion instead of the confidence of the public." Lord Randolph had spoken approvingly of the action of the American police in the slaughter of Irishmen. Harcourt said that Churchill's language was "more lawless, more mischievous, more abominable than any of the language for which men were being sent to prison in Ireland."

Among his other engagements was an appearance with Gladstone at the meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Nottingham, from which they returned by way of Derby, Harcourt having induced his leader to address a meeting there. It was at the Nottingham gathering that a new force in politics appeared on Harcourt's horizon. Writing to his wife (October 19), he said, "Asquith made a really remarkable speech on which I greatly complimented him. It was the only speech of the afternoon."

In the midst of these activities, Harcourt was discussing with Mr. Morley the wisdom of going with him to Ireland as a counter demonstration to the visit of Hartington and Goschen to Dublin. He was doubtful about the tactical wisdom of appearing on an Irish platform, a view in which he was supported by Gladstone and Spencer. He was all out for Home Rule, but he still had no great affection for his allies. "Dillon is a fine fellow, but not altogether of the best judgment," he wrote to Mr. Morley. And what did "the old serpent of Avondale" (Parnell) say on the subject? "Patriotism does not seem to be a healthy occupation. What a lot they are! Parnell, Dillon, O'Brien, Sexton, all interesting gentlemen in the last stages of debility; only T. P. O'Connor seems in rude health and he is not a patriot. You take care or you won't be fit for a plank bed yourself." Mr. Morley shared his feeling. "I wish to

heaven our allies were Englishmen, with English habits of business," he wrote to Harcourt (November 30) while engaged in discussing the tour with the Irish leaders. "I am neither surprised nor sorry that the counter-meeting at Dublin is damping off," replied Harcourt. "I am sorry that your young and confiding heart is beginning to cherish doubts as to our allies."

In the end the idea of a joint visit was abandoned, though Mr. Morley himself went to Ireland later with Ripon.

## CHAPTER IV

### “ RESOLUTE GOVERNMENT ”

Succession to the leadership of the Liberal Party—Harcourt and Mr. Morley—Arrest of Irish Members—Mr. Balfour's Irish administration—Mr. Chamberlain at Malwood—Harcourt at Oldham—Hostility to Goschen—The Duke of Argyll—Harcourt on Goschen's Budget—Irish Land Purchase.

**D**URING the autumn of 1887 the Press, especially the Unionist Press, was much occupied with an old question, the succession to the Liberal leadership. The change that had come over the face of parties had cleared the field of several possible competitors. Hartington, Chamberlain, and Goschen were now finally out of the picture, and two men were left in apparent rivalry, Harcourt and Mr. Morley. By general consent, Harcourt's parliamentary gifts were second only to those of Gladstone, but Mr. Morley had won a peculiar position of authority in regard to the great question that held the stage, and the moral distinction that was the note of his political outlook gave him a high place in the regard of the Party. It was assumed in the Unionist press that a violent struggle of ambitions was going on between the two chief lieutenants of Gladstone. It was a singularly unfounded suspicion. From the emergence of the Home Rule issue to the end of his life Harcourt was in closer and more affectionate communication with Mr. Morley than with any other public man. This intimate relation was interrupted in 1893-4 by the clash over the financial clauses of the Home Rule Bill and by the acute differences among Ministers at the time of Mr. Gladstone's resignation, when Mr. Morley



did not support Harcourt's claims to the premiership. But in Opposition the two men resumed the old tie. In the innumerable letters that passed between them, letters full of fun and literary allusion as well as of more weighty matters, there is no further hint of a serious breach in their relations or their good feeling. Occasionally Mr. Morley "rubs his eyes" at some outbreak of his colleague, but disagreement rarely approaches a quarrel, and Harcourt is the first to laugh at his own irascibility. "I have not yet worked up my next factious fit," he writes to Mr. Morley (October 8), "but I shall do so in good time." "I am doing nothing here and doing it very well, with much satisfaction to myself and my country," he writes a little later from Malwood. "I wish heartily you would come and help me. You ought not to abandon a friend in so worthy a pursuit." But the invitation is in vain. "I have been confined to my bed for five days," Mr. Morley writes, "and am booked, I should think, for as many more—gastric obstruction, which is much less amusing than parliamentary ditto. Andrew Clark and other learned men are endeavouring to frame new rules of procedure. I shall pass this forenoon in imagination in wandering about the New Forest with you and drinking gallons of lemon squash." And when Harcourt intimated that since Mr. Morley cannot go to him, he will go to Mr. Morley, the latter expresses his delight. "You cannot come at the wrong time, either Wednesday, Thursday, or any other day. . . . I have, however, a little of the feeling of old Johnson, when he was ill, and there was some talk of a visit from Burke. 'Sir,' said Johnson, 'if I were to see the fellow now, it would kill me; he calls forth all my powers.' You will have to use your giant strength mercifully."

They had a frank enjoyment of each other's qualities. "Your speech (at Lancaster) is first-rate," writes Mr. Morley (November 23). "The passage about Hartington in Dublin, with his imaginary critic, *pueris declamatio fiet*, in future times. I would give half my advantage over you in years, if I could have quarter of your gifts of speech."

"Please supply me with some straw; I have a superabundance of mud," says Harcourt, busily engaged at Malwood in making bricks for another speech. In this atmosphere of high spirits and mutual chaff the two friends conducted their discussion of grave matters while in the Press they were represented as engaged in a sleepless duel for the succession to the Liberal leadership. The fact is worth recalling for the light it throws on a later episode and the common view that Harcourt was consumed with ambition and jealousy of those who stood in his way. He was, of course, ambitious. He had the ambition of conscious power; but it was not a petty ambition, and the efforts he made to keep Chamberlain, who had become easily his most formidable competitor for the succession, within the Party fold is conclusive proof that personal supremacy, however much he liked it, was not the ultimate motive of his public action. It was not until December that a new name was started in the Press for the leadership stakes. The *Spectator* (December 17, 1887), which liked neither Harcourt nor Mr. Morley, introduced Lord Rosebery as the true successor to Gladstone, and the suggestion gave new stimulus to the discussion over the Christmas season. The objection taken to the proposal was that Lord Rosebery in the Lords could do no more "to control Sir William Harcourt in the House of Commons than the driver of a tandem can do to control a refractory leader which is disposed to turn round and look his coachman in the face"—a phase which went the round of the Press.

Harcourt himself glanced obliquely at the discussion on the leadership in a speech he delivered at Derby (February 7) on the eve of the opening of the Session of 1888. It was a speech in which he compared the records of Gladstone and Salisbury in home and foreign politics, and, referring to the Conservative point of view, remarked: "A very witty Frenchman said of the Tory Party—and I think it is a true description—that it is a Party which on the morning of the Creation would have said, 'Let us conserve chaos.' " Alluding to Gladstone, he warned the Government that

even if they got rid of him they would not get rid of the cause he had made secure :

. . . Great causes (he said) do not perish when leaders fall. The armies of England did not fall when Nelson fell at Trafalgar, and Wolfe upon the Heights of Abraham. Catholic emancipation triumphed after Canning died. It is the object of party organization to keep alive great principles and great causes irrespective of the accidents which befall great men. It is the virtue and the glory of great statesmen that they impress their inspirations upon the generations that succeed them. They plant the acorn. It sends its roots deep into the soil. It stretches its branches to the sky long after its planter is in the dust. And so it is with great principles, and great causes, and great leaders. The great policy of the conciliation of Ireland is grafted and engrained for ever upon the creed of the Liberal Party. It is beyond the reach of changes of fortune and the accidents of life. It can never flag. It will never perish until this great reform in its final feature is embroidered on the colours of the Liberal Party.

"Derby went off very well : good meeting, good speech," wrote Harcourt to his wife at Malwood. But he was less cheerful after the debate on the Address, on which Gladstone delivered a speech of an unexpectedly friendly kind. "I am going down to Malwood to-day," he wrote to Mr. Morley (February 10), "to see if the bracing air of the Forest will recover me from the depressing effect of the *cold-milk-and-water* atmosphere of last night. I don't feel as if this sort of trumpet call will do much to inspirit the troops." Mr. Morley agreed that the speech was much too mild, but reported that Gladstone was "mightily incensed to-night" (February 10). The cause of the change was one of those incidents which were becoming the commonplace of the Irish struggle. Patrick O'Brien, an Irish member, was seized at the gates of Palace Yard by mistake for another member, Gilhooley, whom the police desired to arrest. A little later Gilhooley himself was taken by the police under extraordinary circumstances. On leaving the House he was surrounded by about a hundred Liberal members who were hustled by the police before Gilhooley could be captured. The double incident created much indignation, and Mr. Morley wrote to Harcourt, who was still at Malwood, to

come up to take part on the question of privilege. "It seems intolerable," he wrote (February 11), "that a member in attendance on Parliament should find a band of detectives at every exit from the House. It may be hard to define, but surely a hunted member ought to have a certain amount of 'law' given to him. Anyhow, Parnell is in a vicious humour, and will make things uncomfortable. So much the better. Milk and water won't carry us through this business." But Harcourt was still nursing his wrath at the "cold-milk-and-water" episode. "Malwood is delicious and the air very factious," he replied. But he would be to the fore in the debate, and hoped to find a little more fight in the Party. But he had no enthusiasm for the subject. "I doubt," he said, "if much will be made of privilege, and do not think that your doctrine that the police are bound to give a man a run for his life will hold water."

## II

But, whatever his not infrequent irritations with his colleagues, Harcourt did not let them appear in public. The spirit of the Party, which was his permanent pre-occupation, had to be kept up, and he returned to the combat with his accustomed ardour. He might belabour his friends in private, but he made up for this by the heartiness with which he belaboured his foes in public, as when speaking at York (April 12) of Mr. Balfour's regime in Ireland, he said :

. . . Mr. Balfour is a philosopher who has got hold of a Coercion Bill, and a philosopher is a very dangerous person to trust with such a terrible implement as that. Now, emperors and tyrants, and even heroes, are susceptible to human weaknesses, but a philosopher has none. He carries on the most excruciating experiments in vivisection in the interests of science ; the palpitations of the victims only add a zest to the experiment. To him the groans of Bodyke and the shrieks of Glenbeigh are only capital operations which illustrate the science of landlordism.

The rigours of the Balfourian rule in Ireland were one of the main themes of the Session. Resolute government,

with all its accompaniments of evictions, proclamations, imprisonment of members and general ruthlessness, was at its height, and public feeling was profoundly stirred by the exposure of the cruelties of repression. There was much controversy on the subject of the treatment of Mr. Dillon and other prisoners, and Mr. Morley, in raising a debate on June 25 on the operation of the Act, gave the typical case of an old man and his wife charged with taking "forcible possession" of an outhouse after they had been turned out of their holding. Thus, he said, an old man of seventy-five years of age, scarcely able to stand and so deaf that he knew nothing of what went on at the trial, was sentenced to a month's imprisonment for the "crime" of taking shelter from the inclemency of the weather in an outhouse on the holding from which he had been evicted.

In this prolonged conflict over the new coercion methods Mr. Balfour made adroit play with the not very distant history of the repressive measures taken in Ireland under the rule of Spencer and Harcourt. There were wide differences in the two cases. The eviction of the peasantry for failure to pay admittedly exorbitant rents had formed no part of the former system. The measures which Spencer and Harcourt had carried out had been chiefly directed against crime, especially the organized crime largely fomented from America. But there was a sufficient case for the *tu quoque* argument to furnish so skilful a controversialist as Mr. Balfour with abundant material of attack and defence. This was especially so in the matter of the treatment of political prisoners. The severity of Mr. Balfour's methods went beyond the practice of Harcourt, but the fact that political offences had been punished with imprisonment by his opponent gave Mr. Balfour a dialectical advantage, and both Spencer and Harcourt felt that in the circumstances Gladstone's unqualified line of attack on the treatment of political prisoners in Ireland was dangerous. "For myself," wrote Spencer to Harcourt (October 18), "I should have strongly preferred leaving the question alone, or only dealing in a broad way with it, but Mr. G.

plunged so deep that I thought it probable, sooner or later, that he would come to me for our case." He discussed with Harcourt the issue of a statement in reply to Mr. Balfour, but Harcourt was not convinced that it would be wise. Writing to Spencer, he said :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

MALWOOD, October 19.— . . . If you stood as clear in the matter of Harrington and others subjected to ordinary imprisonment for political offences as I do in the case of Davitt and his treatment, I should say publish by all means. In Davitt's case I am not certain that the question of prison clothes was ever pressed but, generally speaking, he was treated like a first-class misdemeanant, and that on the ground that he was sent back to prison not as a criminal but as a political offender. Accordingly he did not consort with the other prisoners. He was not confined to prison diet. He had all the books and writing materials he desired. He asked for Hansard, which I allowed him, though I stated at the time that I thought it would be a serious aggravation of his punishment to read it. In my case the thing is simple enough because happily Davitt was the only political prisoner I ever had on my hands.

The difficulty I feel about the Irish Government is that though you and Trevelyan appear to have accepted the same principles of action I cannot clearly make out what you did thereupon either in the case of Harrington or of others committed to ordinary imprisonment for political offences. . . .

The real point is what substantial relaxations can you show that you made in the case of your prisoners as distinguished from Balfour's. Your letter is very hazy on this point, and there will be plenty of people in Ireland ready enough to trip you up on it. . . . I am on the whole disposed to agree with J. Morley that your case is not good enough to make it worth while reopening the discussion. . . .

But there was one phase of Mr. Balfour's policy which filled Harcourt with unmitigated wrath. Under the Crimes Act every defendant sentenced to more than a month's imprisonment had the right of appeal to the county court judge, who was in Ireland independent of the Crown. This right, however, became a whip for the back of the appellants themselves, for their sentences instead of being reduced were often increased. A notorious instance was that of Father McFadden, a popular priest of Gweedore, who appealed against a sentence of three months and had it

increased to six. This practice outraged the lawyer's conscience in Harcourt, and when Justin McCarthy moved the adjournment of the House on the subject (April 24) he denounced the increase of sentences on appeal as unconstitutional. It was "brutal and ferocious oppression," and he suggested quite plainly that it had been instigated by Mr. Balfour himself in a speech at Birmingham. Mr. Balfour described the imputation that the judges were receiving inspiration from Dublin Castle as a "foul libel" on them, and temper rose very high, the controversy overflowing from the House into the columns of *The Times*, to which Harcourt wrote indignant letters. Personal relations became embittered under the stress of these angry passages, and it was at this time (May 1) that Harcourt writing to Spencer added a postscript: "There was a touching and heartbreaking scene in the H. of C. last night when Arthur Balfour renounced for ever his friendship and esteem for John Morley. There has been nothing like it since the celebrated breach between Fox and Burke."

This language would sound a little transpontine if it were not borne in mind that to Harcourt the personal influences of politics were always a powerful motive. On the legal side he was detached and abstract enough, but in affairs the contacts with men counted for much. He had an enormous appetite for friendship, and the attractions and repulsions of personality played an unusual part in his public life. They had no relation to his political sympathies, and the result was often perplexing to those who regarded the social and political spheres as having the same orbits. The fact that Harcourt could never bring his personal friendships into line with his political friendships had something to do with the suspicion that he was insincere—that in private he was one thing and in public another. The matter almost assumed the aspect of a "party" question at this time, in connection with a visit of Chamberlain to Malwood at Whitsuntide. "I was amused," he wrote to Lewis Harcourt, "to get a note to say that 'the Party' are wrath at Joe's visit to Malwood." To this

note he replied as follows to Arnold Morley, then Chief Whip of the Liberal Party :

*Harcourt to Arnold Morley.*

MALWOOD, Sunday, May 6.—I am amused at what you tell me as to the sentiments on the "Round Table." I don't know who puts these gossiping paragraphs into the newspapers. The pressmen are nothing but a set of eavesdropping flunkys. It is quite true that the "Round Table" is at Malwood, and that I hope on Whitsunday we shall discuss it much—*victual*.

The bitterness, jealousy and intolerance of our Nonconformist Radicals is intolerable. They don't understand how people can consort together as friends without some deep conspiracy. I asked Joe to come on the 25th for a few days which he could not do, and he accordingly proposed himself for the 18th, when it happens J. Morley will be here. So that the coincidence is accidental. But I am not going to quarrel with all my old friends for all the Ellises & Co. in creation. I have arrived at an age when one does not easily make new friends or part with old ones. \*

I cannot have them all *Non Cons* and Parnellites at Malwood. Life would be unbearable on such terms.

I wish you would ask the Press Association to announce that I expect the Pope the same week. I hope to get many Unionists of the most malignant type in the Forest, which is the proper habitation of beasts of the chase. I hope that when Joe is clear off the premises and the house fumigated you will give us a day or two before the end of the holidays.

And to Mr. John Morley, who was disturbed about the comments in the Press, he wrote (May 11) urging him not to be "intimidated by the Press gang" :

. . . If you and I are not fit to form our own judgment and "gang our own gait" in such matters we are poor creatures. Don't do that which would look like weakness in you and a snub to me. If you do I will have you made "Duke of South Kensington" at once.

Harcourt's feeling for Chamberlain was very cordially returned. Later in the year, on November 2, Chamberlain sent a pleasant note to Malwood to tell Harcourt of his approaching marriage to Miss Endicott. Public differences had not obliterated old friendship, and he sometimes flattered himself that Harcourt's observations might be taken in a Pickwickian sense. So he desired to be the first to convey the news of the change in his fortunes. He was on his way



to America by the time this announcement reached Malwood. He wrote at Christmas time from the Riviera, "whither he had taken his bride, to acknowledge Harcourt's congratulations and the gift of a cigar case, adding that he hoped their public controversies would not be allowed to interfere with their old and delightful intimacy.

But these civilities did not prevent the two friends from attacking each other with great acerbity in public. "Nothing can be worse or more contemptible than Joe in tone, spirit and temper," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley (September 28) of Chamberlain's "kept party" speech at Nottingham. "The insinuation that the Parnellites are only actuated by a desire of money and we by desire of place is 'real mean' and is thoroughly second-rate form. . . . I shall certainly not spare him when I have to handle him at Oldham." He fulfilled his promise in his speech at Oldham on October 11 when, dealing with Chamberlain's allegation that Gladstone had forced on the Irish question in 1886, he exposed Chamberlain's previous attempts to force the issue, his negotiations with Parnell, the leader of the "kept party" he now denounced, his Council scheme, his projected visit to Ireland under the auspices of Parnell, the failure of that project because Parnell had a better offer from the Tory Party, his action in overthrowing the Salisbury Government in 1886 in order to bring in Gladstone with a new plan for the government of Ireland, the general objects of which he knew at the time and when he joined Gladstone's Government. "And this is the man," he cried, "who condemns Mr. Gladstone for bringing forward and forcing on the Irish policy, and with holding communication with Irish leaders and with Mr. Parnell."

It was in this speech that Harcourt returned with great emphasis to a phase of the Irish question the magnitude of which he realized at that time more acutely than anyone engaged in the controversy—the bearing of the subject on America and American relations :

. . . These millions of Irish in America (he said) act and react upon the policy of the United States just as they do on the policy of

England, and of all things in the world that which I most desire is the cordial friendship of America. It is for that reason that I long for the conciliation of Ireland, of the Irish people in Ireland and the Irish people in the United States—first for the good of Ireland, next for the credit of England, and, not least, because I believe that it is absolutely essential to a good understanding between England and America. No one who knows anything of the relations between the two countries can be ignorant of the infinite mischief which is wrought by the bitter and insulting language which men in the position of Mr. Chamberlain address to a great and influential section of the American people. . . .

### III

The agreeable mingling of private friendship with public hostility that continued to characterize Harcourt's relations with Chamberlain and James, did not prevail in the case of Goschen, and the duel between these two born antagonists, which continued through the life of this Parliament, reached an acute phase at the end of the autumn session of 1888. Harcourt was leading the Opposition in the absence of Gladstone, and W. H. Smith, the leader of the House, consulted him on the subject of the arrangements for closing the Session. Harcourt intimated to him that he would find it impossible in his (Smith's) absence to act with one who had failed, as Goschen had done, in courtesy to his opponents. Smith spoke to Goschen, who thereupon wrote to Harcourt a letter in which he said :

*Goschen to Harcourt.*

HOUSE OF COMMONS, December 14.—I was sorry to hear from Smith that he had derived the impression from some remarks of yours that you felt more hurt at something I said in my late Birmingham speech than is usually the case with men like you and me, who are accustomed to receive hard blows as well as to give them. We have attacked each other pretty freely during these last two years, and I must honestly say that I have sometimes thought that your attacks on me were marked with an exceptional bitterness, which I confess has given me pain. I now fear that I must have erred myself in that direction, and if that is so, I do not hesitate to express my regret.

In his reply Harcourt administered a severe homily on parliamentary courtesies :

*Harcourt to Goschen.*

9, PARK PLACE, ST. JAMES'S STREET, *December 15.*— . . . To say that I "felt hurt" at your language addressed to me at Birmingham would not be a correct expression. I have been too long in public life and outlived too much abuse to be sensitive on that score. You are perfectly at liberty to speak of me with all the bitterness and hostility which you may feel—and I shall not complain. Within the fair limits of political warfare (where men do not hit below the belt) I am as ready to receive as to deal hard blows with good humour.

That is not the question here.

As I have learned the honourable traditions of English public life—especially as between leading public men—there is a clear and broadly defined line of demarcation between invective however vehement against an opponent and the imputation to him of a base character and unworthy motives. Language of the latter sort in my opinion deserves to be condemned, and ought to be resented. It is beyond the pale of legitimate controversy; it is the use towards an adversary (I say nothing of a former colleague) of poisoned missiles.

I pass by your adjectives without remark—they belong to the vocabulary of common abuse—but when you spoke of me as a "soldier of fortune" in my conduct of the Opposition in the absence of Mr. Gladstone you employed a phrase which no one could fail to understand as intended to convey a charge of base and mercenary behaviour. . . . You may denounce as you please my conduct of business in that position. I am responsible for it to my own Party and to the country. But with a proper regard for my own self-respect and that of my friends I cannot allow my public character and personal motives to be grossly assailed.

Of the propriety of such a charge as you have brought against me I shall say nothing, except that it was addressed to a public man who has never served but one Chief, and never acted but with one Party. "Soldiers of fortune" are generally men whose record is of an opposite character.

You speak of the freedom and bitterness of my speeches. I claim to exercise the right of speaking of men and of things as I think of them. That has been the habit of English political life, and he is little fitted to take part in it who shrinks from the encounter. But I cannot charge my memory with any instance in which I have traduced the character or motives of an adversary as you have done mine. If such can be found I should regard it not only with regret but with shame.

As however you express in your letter a regret—not I observe for the grossness of the attack but for the pain it may have caused—I shall take no further notice of it except to point out that private regrets imperfectly obliterate public insults. If I had been capable of imputing to you in a public speech—let us say corrupt objects in your conduct of public finance—I doubt if you would have been

satisfied if I had told you in private that I was sorry you were so sensitive as to resent it, and that if you felt hurt by it I regretted it. . . .

"You strain the meaning of my remarks much beyond what seems to me the natural interpretation," replied Goschen, "and on the other hand you evidently have not realised that a great deal of what you have said about me has appeared to me and to my friends to deserve the language which you use in your letter with respect to my words." He agreed, however, that private regrets were an inadequate reparation for public statements and suggested the publication of the correspondence. This, however, Harcourt, whose anger was now abating, did not ask for, and the incident closed. It had possibly occurred to him in the interval that earlier in the Session he had said something about a "deserter" who was not to be allowed to return as a "spy," and that between a charge of being a "deserter" and a charge of being a "soldier of fortune" there was not much to choose.

With a friend of an earlier date than any of these he crossed swords in public. His friendship with the Duke of Argyll had long since ceased to have any political significance. As Harcourt had advanced, Argyll had receded, and the Home Rule issue had been the last straw to the exiguous remnant of his Liberalism. Argyll's anger at Gladstone's policy expressed itself in vehement speeches and letters, and replying in *The Times* (October 31) to one of the letters which had dealt with Gladstone's land legislation and the question of rent, Harcourt said :

. . . The Duke of Argyll is a politician whose creed is comprehended in a single article, the divine right of rent. In his view the whole machinery of government exists principally in order to enable a few persons who happen to have the monopoly of the soil to extract from those who cultivate it, not only the uttermost farthing it will yield, but in many cases a good deal more. The necessity for the exceptional land legislation in Ireland and the West Highlands of Scotland arose from the flagrant and intolerant abuse of their legal powers by the proprietors in both countries. It was found absolutely necessary in the interests of humanity to interpose the barrier of a judicial arbitration to restrain an extortion which had worked

incredible injustice. . . . There is no doubt much to be said in theory against a system of legislation which ought never to have been necessary, but the doctrines of the Duke of Argyll, illustrated by the practice of the Marquis of Clanricarde, have been too much for the principle of freedom of contract. Humanity and justice are the indispensable substratum of all law which deserves to be respected, and it was necessary to rescue the executive and judicial authority from the reproach of being accessory to the proprietary system of Ireland and of the Highlands of Scotland. . . .

As the attack on the Duke of Argyll indicates, Harcourt's ancient feud with the landlords had not cooled with time and experience. It had been the theme of his criticism of the Budget earlier in the year, and speaking at York in April he said :

. . . The great blot on the Budget is the Succession Duty. You know, probably, that on the death of each individual, the State—and I think it is very fair—levies upon the accumulative property a certain proportion for the use of the State under the name of the probate and legacy duty and the succession duty, and personal property is subject to probate and legacy duty ; but the rate that is levied on land is very small in proportion to that which is levied upon personal property. Why has that been ? Why, because up to this time, the majority in the House of Commons has always been more or less under the influence of the landowners. It is a perfectly recognized fact that the levy for imperial purposes under the succession duties gives an undue and unfair preference to land. The Liberal Party, whether they succeed or fail, mean to record their opinion in the House of Commons that the tax on all kinds of property, whether the personal property of individuals or real property, should be fair and equal between the two. If they were you would realize a sum of money which would enable you to dispense with small and irritating taxes, and give you a fund which might do something for the consuming poor.

It was this feeling that the dice were loaded in the interests of the landlords that was chiefly responsible for the most acute difference he had at this time with Mr. Morley. He had shared much of Chamberlain's hostility to the Land Purchase Bill of 1886, and he had shared it for much the same reason—that purchase was a concession to a discredited landlordism. After the fall of Gladstone's Government there had been some reaction against land purchase both amongst the leaders and among the rank and file.

On the other hand, the Tory Government had adopted the principle in the Ashbourne Act of 1887, which provided £5,000,000 for purchase. Mr. Morley, who with Spencer had chiefly inspired the Gladstone land purchase scheme, still maintained that land purchase was a necessary part of the Irish settlement, but Harcourt was increasingly unsympathetic, and Gladstone himself had never been enthusiastic for the proposal, though his judgment had been overborne by Spencer and Morley in 1886. When, therefore, in the autumn Session the Government introduced a short Bill to extend the provision of the Ashbourne Act of 1887, there was a large measure of Liberal resistance, on the ground that any dealing with Irish land for the moment should take the form only of a remission of arrears. Gladstone did not object to land purchase in principle, but he objected to it in homœopathic doses, and said that purchases under the Ashbourne Act were not voluntary and that in 1,198 cases out of 8,000 the Land Commission had found the terms exacted by the landlord so exorbitant that they had interfered and upset the "voluntary contract." Mr. Morley, while objecting to certain provisions of the Ashbourne Act and agreeing on the precedence of arrears, stood by the principle of purchase, and appealed to Harcourt, who was to speak at Newcastle on November 29, to "leave land purchase open as a possible necessity." But Harcourt was now decisively and publicly hostile, and in his speech at Newcastle said he did not think that after the opinion expressed on land purchase at the election of 1886 the proposals were likely to be renewed. The English people would not expend the money of the taxpayers for the benefit of the Irish landlords. The Liberal Government had indeed proposed to give relief and to advance English money for the sake of a nation whom they proposed to conciliate. That was intelligible.

. . . But what do you think (he said) of advancing millions after millions to people who are denounced, as the Irish are denounced by Lord Salisbury, as robbers and villains and scoundrels, and to be the creditor for untold millions to people whom you provoke, whom

you insult and whom you coerce. All I can say is that a financial policy of that character seems to me to be a policy of insanity.

In this speech he returned once more to the theme of Anglo-American relations as affected by the Irish question. "I ask you to ponder upon it," he concluded. "While you have a hostile Ireland you can never really have a friendly America."

## CHAPTER V

### TRIUMPH OF PARNELL

Charges against Parnell—Demand for a Select Committee—The Parnell Commission—Harcourt and the Attorney-General—Pigott's collapse—Harcourt's speeches in the provinces—Solidarity with the Irishmen—Damages by *The Times*.

A NEW and sensational phase of the Irish struggle had, meanwhile, begun to engross the public mind. It centred around the person of Parnell. That remarkable man had brought the constitutional movement within sight of victory, and the enemies of Home Rule very naturally regarded the destruction of his moral position as a capital necessity of their case. It is easy to believe the worst of those to whom we are opposed in opinion or interest, and every one who disagrees with us is a potential "Hun." There is no reason to doubt that the political foes of Parnell were honestly convinced that he was secretly in sympathy with the physical-force party, and that he had subterranean contacts with them. It was an entire misapprehension of Parnell's attitude. Whether he was opposed to physical force on moral grounds may be an open question ; that he was opposed to it on practical grounds is beyond doubt. He was satisfied that in a trial of strength the material superiority of England coupled with the geographical disadvantages of Ireland would make the result a foregone conclusion. In spite of the air of mystery that enveloped him he was no dreamer, but the most practical of politicians, and he was not tempted to turn to idle violence the energies that could be more profitably used in the sphere in which he had shown himself a supreme strategist, and in which he had already achieved such conspicuous



success. He was convinced that the only path to Irish freedom was by constitutional methods, and there are few assertions that can be made with more confidence than that his influence diverted the mind of Nationalist Ireland from ideas of violence to faith in parliamentary agitation. When ideas of violence were revived a quarter of a century later they were revived not in Nationalist Ireland, but in "loyalist" Ulster. It was the example of the Orange Covenant, backed by a rebel army organized to resist the decrees of Parliament and sanctioned by the rhetoric of distinguished statesmen and lawyers, that swept the constitutional movement and the Nationalist Party out of the field before a tidal wave of direct action.

But the political strategy of Unionism in the 'eighties turned mainly upon the idea that Parnellism was only a disguise for crime, and that if the disguise could be torn aside the cause of Home Rule, revealed as a monster of outrage and violence, would be discredited and destroyed. The accusations of *The Times* had received the official endorsement of the Unionist leaders from Lord Salisbury downwards, and the refusal of the Government to grant a Select Committee of the House to inquire into those accusations had left the air charged with the poison gas of unproved but widely accepted suspicion. Parnell's very natural refusal not to submit an issue so saturated with political prejudice to the arbitrament of a London jury was construed into a confession of guilt, and it seemed that he and his movement were condemned to rest permanently under the imputations which had been so authoritatively made and had remained unanswered. But an incident occurred in the beginning of July 1888 which brought the whole case of *The Times* to the challenge of facts. A member of the Irish Party named F. H. O'Donnell brought an action against *The Times* on the ground that the allegations in "Parnellism and Crime" constituted a constructive libel upon himself as a member of the Irish Party. The case collapsed, the judge holding that the plaintiff had made out no case of libel against himself. There the matter

would have ended, but for the fact that the Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster, who had conducted the defence for *The Times*, had used the occasion not only to reaffirm the accusations of *The Times* against Parnell and his party, but to extend them by the production of new letters alleged to have been written by Parnell and Egan. The monstrous unfairness of the proceeding brought the matter to a climax. It exposed the futility of an appeal to the law courts in circumstances of this kind, and the association of the chief law officer of the Crown with *The Times*, and still more his conduct of the case, shocked the public sense of decency. Parnell took prompt action. On July 6 in the House of Commons he made a personal statement in which he denounced as forgeries the new letters read at the trial by Webster, and alleged to have been written by himself, and three days later he asked for the appointment of a Select Committee of the House to inquire into the authenticity of these and other documents produced by the Attorney-General and involving the credit of members of the House. This was again refused, but W. H. Smith, the leader of the House, offered a commission of judges to inquire into the charges not only against members but against "other persons." The proposal was received with indignant astonishment on the Liberal benches. "The enormity of this sudden extension of the operation," says Lord Morley (*Life of Gladstone*), "was palpable. A certain member is charged with the authorship of incriminating letters. To clear his character as a member of Parliament he demands a select committee. We decline to give a committee, says the Minister, but we offer you a commission of judges, and you may take our offer or refuse as you please, only the judges must inquire not merely into your question of the letters, but into all the charges and allegations made against all of you, and not these only but into the charges and allegations made against other people as well."

Against this proposal to convert a simple inquiry on specific facts into a roving commission of general political

imputation and innuendo, the Liberal leaders were in indignant agreement. But Parnell had reached the limits of his patience. He would have the charges investigated, if not fairly, then unfairly. He had made up his mind that he could prove that the letters were forgeries, and that if this were done the general mud-throwing would not count. "I told Mr. P. our views yesterday afternoon," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (July 14), "with the usual effect that we might as well have saved our breath to cool our porridge. Herschell came to talk to me. He is warmly of *our* way of thinking—that P. ought to have lain low. He hates the proposed commission as a downright bad precedent, unconstitutional, etc. But of course we must now make the best of it." "We must fight for a definite issue instead of a universal mud-bath," replied Harcourt. "I think the thing should be confined to *outrage and murder*." To Gladstone he wrote (July 18), arguing against any arrangement with the Government as to the judges to be appointed. "It would make us parties and partners in a concern with which we ought to have nothing to do." The hand of the Government was rapidly disclosed. The offer of a commission, made nominally as an act of justice to the Parnellites, quickly assumed the character of a terrific engine for blowing Parnellism out of the water. In the angry debates that followed on the Bill setting up the Commission Harcourt denounced the purpose of the Government in unmeasured terms. The real issue was the charge of complicity with murder brought against Parnell, and the Government were setting up a political inquiry into the conduct of the Land League. He protested against the procedure of Sir Richard Webster, counsel for *The Times* (he would not in this matter refer to him as the Attorney-General), for opening evidence in the O'Donnell *v.* Walter case against persons who were not present to defend themselves. This was against the principles of the Bar. The Bill seemed to have been framed in the same spirit of endeavour to confuse the issues as was shown by the counsel for *The Times* when he brought before the Court matters that the jury were not empanelled

to try. As for the proposal that the charges need not be defined, he said:

. . . Nothing would shock you ; for we know very well that you are racing for blood. What we protest against is that any man, even an Irish member, should be called upon to plead to a sort of hotch-potch, miscellaneous slander. That is not judicial inquiry. You may as well call upon all the members of a particular society to go before a tribunal and prove that they are not disreputable people. That is really the framework and conception of the Bill.

At a later stage (July 31) he accused the Government of being in collusion with *The Times* on the subject of the constitution and powers of the Commission, and when the Attorney-General for Scotland called for the withdrawal of this " unfounded slander," Harcourt said he would withdraw if the First Lord denied that in settling the terms of the Bill Mr. Walter of *The Times* had been consulted. W. H. Smith repudiated the suggestion, but being pressed by Harcourt admitted that Walter had called on him, though only as " an old friend," and without any reference to the Bill. The next day there was another heated discussion, Harcourt pointing out that, having stated in introducing the Bill that the inquiry was into charges against members of the House, the Government had now brought in other parties, and by so doing were breaking their covenant with the House. Smith said he had omitted " and others " in his original statement " by a slip "—a slip, as Gladstone pointed out, that was unnoticed and uncorrected by his colleagues who must have been aware of the Cabinet decision. There followed a series of violent duels between Gladstone and Harcourt on the one side, and Hartington and Goschen on the other. In the course of these altercations Harcourt observed, " There are far more adroit men sitting on that bench than the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Goschen). The Rt. Hon. Gentleman the Chief Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant is much cleverer. He wears a better mask. But if you want to see true bitterness, true unfairness, and true hypocrisy, commend me to the frank innocence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer." Referring afterwards

(December 24, 1889) to the passionate scenes of that day Mr. Morley, writing to Harcourt, said :

. . . Also, tell the same paragon of sons and secretaries (Mr. Lewis Harcourt) that the ferocious and sanguinary scene between you, Goschen, and Hartington, of which I spoke at Malwood, was August 1, 1888. If Courtney had not intervened, *pulveris exigui jactu*, blood must have flowed. Mr. G. and I agreed that in the whole course of our parliamentary life, we had never seen such disgraceful violence. You certainly have the knack, and a blessed one it is, of rousing all the worst passions of humanity. . . .

From Parliament, Harcourt went into the country preaching a crusade against the scandal of converting a fair inquiry into specific charges into a mud-bath of political insinuation and propaganda. Speaking at Stoneleigh Park on August Bank Holiday, he said :

. . . It is not necessary to say much about the forged letters attributed to Mr. Parnell. If you had been in the House of Commons . . . you would have seen it was quite apparent that these gentlemen who have been trading on the forged letters know very well that they are forged. Their whole behaviour—their endeavour to escape from a fair straight issue upon the subject of the letters—makes it apparent that they have never believed in them, though they have condescended to use them. Regarding the Irish people, as they do regard them, as a kind of noxious vermin, they think they are entitled to use any kind of poison. . . . You had an example of it in the way *The Times* dealt with Mr. Redmond. They brought a charge against him of the most dishonouring character. He gave them proof that it was false. They suppressed his letter. They repeated the charge, and years afterwards they put that charge that had been so refuted, and which they must have known to be false, into the mouth of the Attorney-General to repeat in a court of law.

He then described the way in which *The Times* had insinuated that Gladstone had intrigued against Forster. Harcourt had written a letter himself showing this to be false, and communicated it to the Press. The other papers published it ; *The Times* alone omitted to do so. "If you take the most rabid Nationalist paper, whether in Ireland or America, you will find nothing in it so disgraceful as the conduct of *The Times* newspaper."

But in spite of protests, whether in Parliament or in the

country, the Government proceeded with their scheme for a general arraignment of Parnellism, rushing the measure through in the end by the ruthless exercise of the guillotine. The Commission, composed of three judges, Hannen, Day and Smith, commenced its sittings on September 17. It sat for 128 days, concluding the inquiry on November 22, 1889. The story of that unprecedented trial—the trial of unnamed men, charged with unspecified offences and deprived of the protection of a jury—does not belong to the subject of this book, and need only be briefly glanced at. The early sittings were occupied, not with the true subject of the inquiry, the authenticity of the Parnell letters, but with the building up of a mass of evidence intended to show that the Irish Party were incriminated in the activities of the physical-force men both in Ireland and in America. Though nominally *The Times* was on its defence, it was the Parnellites who were really in the dock, with the whole resources of the Government brought to bear upon them, and with the Attorney-General framing the indictment. Day by day the strangest medley of witnesses, spies from America, informers from Ireland, peasants from Kerry, priests, policemen, landlords, agents, filled the stage, each adding some trickle to the general stream of defamation.

Parnell waited unmoved. With his vivid sense of realities, he knew that nothing mattered but the letters, and that to the letters the inquiry must come in the end. If he could prove that they were forgeries, the attack would collapse like a house of cards. And he was sustained by the fact that he carried in his sling a pebble more deadly than all the monstrous batteries of the enemy. He not only knew that the letters were forgeries: he now knew the forger, and had served him with a subpoena before the Commission opened. It was this fact, long suspected if not known by the Attorney-General, that accounted for the desperate efforts to establish an overwhelming case against Parnellism before the subject of the letters was broached. But the evil day, though delayed, could not be escaped. On February 20, 1889, the fiftieth day of the

hearing; Richard Pigott went into the box as a witness for *The Times* to prove how he had come into possession of the letters which he sold to that journal. The next day the cross-examination of the wretched man by Sir Charles Russell began, and in a few hours the whole edifice of "Parnellism and Crime" was rocking to its fall. The cross-examination was continued but not finished next day, and when Pigott left the box Parnell turned to Barry O'Brien and said, "That man will not come into the box again."

The prediction was fulfilled. When his name was called at the next hearing on the following Tuesday there was no answer. He had fled the country. A warrant was issued for his arrest on a charge of perjury. He was followed to Madrid, where on March 5 the officers found him at an hotel. "Wait," he said, "until I go to my room for some things I want," and passing into the next room he fired a bullet through his brain. It was a squalid end to a squalid story, but Pigott was, perhaps, as much to be pitied as condemned. He had for years been picking up a precarious living in the gutters of Dublin journalism when suddenly the path to prosperity opened before him through the adversities of his own country. He had tried his 'prentice hand at fraud on Forster, and when he found the Unionists hungry for any evidence that would convict Parnell of complicity in crime he became an easy tool of their necessities. It was not the exposure of his crude and impudent forgeries that shocked the public mind. Incidents of this sort were common enough in the sordid story of Ireland, which, however poor in herself, had always been a rich country for those who betrayed her. The thing that outraged public opinion was the incredible ease with which responsible and highly placed people in English public life had been imposed on by documents which were manifestly suspect and which they accepted without the most elementary inquiries—indeed with the appearance of avoiding inquiries lest they should prove them untrustworthy.

The sensational episode changed the whole complexion

of politics. The Commission continued its labours, but all interest had passed out of its proceedings. Sympathy with the Irish cause had never been so widespread, and the effect was visible during the ensuing months in the results of the by-elections which revealed a tide flowing strongly in favour of Home Rule. Parnell himself had become a popular figure, and it was no longer held to be good tactics on the part of the Liberal leaders to avoid the appearance of public association with him. Writing to Gladstone (March 9), Harcourt said :

. . . I went late to the Eighty Club dinner last night ; the reception of Parnell and his juxtaposition with Spencer was a striking event, and will have a great effect on the public mind and on the future of the Irish question. There need now be no further difficulty on the public recognition of our *solidarité* with Parnell in the interest of Home Rule. Co-operation with him was always necessary and it is now authentically avowed. In future they will fling the taunt of Parnellite against us in vain. . . .

The Unionists were silent and depressed. "I see the Liberal Unionists had to abandon their proposed big meeting last night," Harcourt wrote to Mr. Morley (April 7), "and I doubt if J. C. [Chamberlain] can face the Birmingham public just now." Meanwhile, both in the House and in the country Harcourt was engaged in turning events to account. He delivered a series of speeches at Ely (March 13), Lambeth (March 20), and Bradford (March 28), which he largely devoted to attacks on *The Times* and the Government. He fastened especially upon the Attorney-General. At Lambeth he said :

. . . We are going to be asked to-morrow or the next day to vote Her Majesty's Attorney-General a salary of what amounts to about £10,000 a year—the largest salary given to any public officer under the Crown. Well, we propose to ask what the Attorney-General has been doing for the last nine months, and what he is going to do perhaps for the next three months, to earn this salary of £10,000. (Cheers.) Are the services upon which the Attorney-General has been so engrossingly engaged, services rendered to a private client ? If so, why is the nation to pay him £10,000 for the miserable residue of his time ? But if they have not been so rendered ; if they have been rendered to Her Majesty's Government ; if the Attorney-



General has been the agent in this transaction, not of *The Times* newspaper, but of the Government of the Queen, then we have a right to ask how he has discharged those duties. (Cheers.) And depend upon it that before that vote is taken we will have an answer to that question. We shall ask the Attorney-General when he knew about Richard Pigott. We shall ask him what he knew about Richard Pigott. The solicitor to *The Times* received a letter from Richard Pigott on November 11, telling him under his own hand that he was a man of infamous character who would not be believed in the witness-box. Did the Attorney-General know of that letter? ("Yes.") That I do not know. If he knew of that letter is it possible to conceive that a man could have gone on maintaining for four months the authenticity of the forged letters, that he could have kept Mr. Parnell during the whole of that time under the infamous charge published every day by *The Times* newspaper, and that he could finally have put Richard Pigott into the box as the witness of truth to swear away the character of the leader of the Irish people? (Cheers.) These are questions which have to be asked and which ought to be asked of a man who is the Attorney-General of the Queen, who is the chief prosecutor of this country, and who is the guardian of the traditions and honour of the English Bar. . . .

In the House, Harcourt took the lead in calling the Government to account, in a succession of attacks culminating on March 22 in an indictment of the Attorney-General, whom he called on to explain how he came to be conducting the case of *The Times* at all. Did he ask the consent of the Government? Was it a State trial? If not, what right had he to make it impossible for himself to advise the House or to act as public prosecutor in any State proceedings arising from the case? He pressed Webster for replies on the following points:

- . . . 1. What did he mean, in the O'Donnell speech, by "other reasons," besides experts, for believing in the forgeries?
2. When did he first know that all rested on Pigott?
3. Was he privy to the letters before publication?
4. Did he know of Pigott's practical self-condemnation before putting him in the box?
5. Why did he not call Pigott till the close?
6. How did he come to vouch for the letters in his official place in the House?

On these points the effect of Webster's replies was as follows:

1. Duty to clients closed his mouth as to the collateral evidence he had in mind. •

2. 5. He was not told about Pigott till well into the case.

3. No.

4. Yes, but he was bound to put him in the box. He saw the letter of November 11 (declaring Pigott's guilt) in the middle of December. It was given to the other side five days before Pigott's examination. (This was shown to be untrue by George Lewis, Parnell's solicitor, who stated in the Press that the letter handed to Russell was one which had no reference to Pigott's untrustworthiness.)

6. That was only speaking, as counsel, of counsel's instructions.

Harcourt had in his speech alluded scornfully to the "apology" which had been offered, and which he was sure Webster would disclaim as the work of "some pettifogging attorney." "That pettifogging and cozening knave," said Webster, "stands before you." The debate was prolonged and violent, and in the end the impeachment was voted down by 286 votes to 206. Much was made of the fact that the lawyers, even most of the Liberal lawyers in the House, had not supported Harcourt in his attack on Webster for dishonourable conduct, but in this matter professional etiquette played an important part. Harcourt himself, though a lawyer, never allowed professional etiquette to compromise his public activities, and was always ready to risk the criticism that he was not loyal to his class. When there was a conflict between what he conceived to be his duties as a public man and professional connections he did not doubt which was the weightier interest he had to protect. In this incident time has justified him. His impeachment of Webster remained as a protest against the indefensible anomaly which permitted law officers of the Crown to engage in private practice which might conflict with the proper fulfilment of their public duties, and years afterwards the anomaly was very properly abolished. The general position which Harcourt took up in regard to the duties of counsel was stated by him shortly afterwards in a speech at St. James's Hall (April 11) at which he appeared on the platform with Thomas Sexton, the orator of the Irish Party. On this, the first occasion on

which the solidarity of the English and Irish Home Rulers was publicly proclaimed—he said, quoting Lord Chief Justice Coleridge :

. . . If men, speaking as advocates, make statements without making careful inquiry into the truth of those statements, they are absolutely without excuse, and deserve the scornful condemnation of all men. (Cheers.) That is what I have always understood, and what I still understand, to be the honourable tradition of the English Bar. I hope it still is so, for of this I am sure, that when it ceases to be so the authority of the Bar will carry little weight with the people of England. People would then begin to ask whether there is a different code, a different conception of fair play in the legal profession from that which governs ordinary men in their actions one towards the other.

\* The labours of the Commission dragged on far into the autumn, but the public had ceased to note them, and when on February 13, 1890, the report was issued it aroused little more than an academic interest. Harcourt anticipated the production of the report by forcing a debate (February 11) on the question of privilege, accusing *The Times* of a breach of privilege on the moving of the second reading of the Crimes Bill of 1887 by the publication and comment on the alleged Parnell letter. It was a speech of great weight and learning—"No more dignified, conclusive and unanswerable argument was ever delivered in the House of Commons," said Mr. Frederic Harrison in writing to Harcourt next day—and the Government majority fell to forty-eight. When the report appeared two days later Gladstone consulted the lawyers of the Party as to the course to pursue. Harcourt wrote to Mr. Morley :

MALWOOD, *February 16*.— . . . I am sorry that you and Mr. G. have been confabulating with the lawyers on the Commission. I don't wonder that you are depressed and confused. These same lawyers are the worst company you can keep on this matter. Instead of taking a broad popular view of the question they have entangled themselves in a lot of small special pleading points and are really responsible for all the harm that has been done, and particularly the dribbling on of the case after the Pigott exposure.

I quite lost my patience with R. Reid at A. Morley's the other night when he proceeded to demonstrate how this point and that point and the other had to be met.

If anything is to be made of this business it must be by discarding the lawyers and their quiddities altogether. . . .

He himself promptly set the example by going to Bath (February 26), and delivering a broadside against the Commission as "a solecism, a monstrosity. . . . There has never been anything like it before, and I rather fancy there will be nothing like it in the future. Three very learned and distinguished men, judges indeed in office but not sitting in a judicial capacity, have been sitting to decide upon the character and the conduct of the great body of the representatives of the Irish people. Such a thing has never been heard of in England since the days of the Stuarts; ever since there has been a free Parliament in England Parliament has thought itself a fit judge of its own representatives." So far as personal crimes were concerned, the judges were competent to deal with issues of fact and law. "But of those matters which belonged to political crime, I think they were more unfit to judge than any other three men you could have found in the Kingdom." With this prelude, he turned to the part *The Times* had played. It stood "gibbeted with the brand of eternal infamy, a monument of lasting disgrace to English journalism, a perpetual record of the base malignity of a political party." From *The Times* he passed to "the accessories before and after the fact to this criminal conspiracy." As for the character of the Land League, the principle on which it was founded was that the land of Ireland belonged to the people of Ireland. The programme advocated by Parnell and Davitt in 1880 advised two years' suspension of ejectments, and compulsory sale by the landlord at twenty years' purchase, the purchase money to be paid by the State on an improved system of land transfer. If this was a criminal conspiracy, what of all the various popular movements of the past? He ran through a long list of historical parallels from Cromwell, Kosciusko, Washington and Garibaldi down to the Reform Bill, and showed that in every case there had been disturbance before great popular movements were successful. Mr. Morley wrote next day :

. . . A most magnificent speech, my dear Harcourt—spacious, commanding, overwhelming. 'Twill make a thoroughly heavy impression—and restore perfect confidence to our people. Nothing could be finer or stronger. . . .

When the debate on the report of the Commission came on in the House on March 3 it was made memorable by one of the most moving of Gladstone's speeches—"finer, I think, for the last twenty minutes than anything I ever heard," wrote Harcourt to his wife next day—and by a scene between Harcourt and Hicks-Beach, the latter charging Harcourt with a "calumnious" suggestion. Harcourt rose to protest, was greeted with shouts of "Order," and retorted that "there could be no order in the House" unless *a member were allowed to repudiate such a charge upon the spot*. But the Speaker said he was alone the judge of order, and, with this sanction, Hicks-Beach persisted in his attacks, Harcourt finally seizing his hat and, amid derisive cheering, quitting the House with the remark, "I will not stay here to be abused in this way." It was one of those not infrequent occasions when his anger got the better of his judgment.

The triumph of Parnell was complete. The public were not interested in what Harcourt called the lawyers' "quid-dities," but took a broad view of the result of the matter. The mountain had been in labour, and to the plain man it had brought forth Pigott. The verdict of public opinion was unqualified, and it reacted powerfully upon the general feeling in regard to Home Rule. For one brief moment it seemed that at long last the Irish issue was passing like a cloud from the sky, and that in a few brief months Gladstone would crown his career by the completion of the great task to which he had consecrated his old age. The victory of Parnell was formally ratified by *The Times*, against which he had now brought an action for libel, claiming damages of £100,000. The action was settled by agreement out of court for £5,000, *The Times* publishing an acknowledgment that it had no legal defence to the action and "no alternative but to come to terms with our opponent or to abide by such a verdict as a jury might think proper to award."

## CHAPTER VI

### FALL OF PARNELL

Hints of coming Disaster—The O'Shea Case—Correspondence with Gladstone—The choice between Gladstone and Parnell—Committee Room, No. 15—Split in the Nationalist Party—Harcourt and Morley discuss the new position of Home Rule—A difference between the two Friends—Break-down of Boulogne Negotiations—Death of Parnell.

**B**UT the clear sky did not last. As the cloud that had hung over the Irish cause so long vanished, another, charged with still more formidable, because more real, elements appeared upon the horizon. Writing to Harcourt on February 3, apropos of the action against *The Times*, Mr. Morley said :

... Last night I dined at Brookes's with E. Hamilton to meet the P. of W. George Lewis was there, and told me the state of things as to P. By the time you get this all the world will know that *The Times* has settled for £5,000. I told Lewis that in my judgment he had done an extremely wise thing, and was very lucky. . . .

He told me much else, which cannot well be written down. I can only say that when the time comes, Walter will have his five thousand pounds' worth of revenge. It will be a horrid exposure, and must, I think, lead to the disappearance of our friend. . . .

The meaning of the dark allusion was understood by Harcourt. For some weeks it had been known to him, as to others in the inner circle of politics, that a petition for divorce in which Parnell figured as the co-respondent had been presented by Captain O'Shea. In this there was no matter of surprise to Harcourt. During his activities at the Home Office he had become acquainted with the secret of Parnell's private life, and the fact was no doubt largely responsible for the attitude he had adopted in regard to

him. He knew that at any time a mine might be sprung which would not merely engulf Parnell and his cause, but would gravely prejudice the interests of the Liberal Party, and while walking in step with Parnell and his supporters he chose to walk warily. Even in the hour of Parnell's triumph he still preserved an air of detachment from the Irish. Writing to Mr. Morley (March 31), apropos of engagements with the Irish members, he said, "I prefer to spend my holidays with Bobby even to the claims of Sexton. And I hope I may still preserve my virtue and die as I have lived without seeing Ireland." His special knowledge of Parnell's life left him no illusions as to the probable result of the action; but among the general public there was a widespread conviction that the new attack on the Irish leader would prove to be as futile as that which had just collapsed so ingloriously, and the bearing of Parnell himself, who seemed icily indifferent to the whole matter, supported this view. Throughout the summer the Home Rule cause, under the favourable wind set up by the Commission, went merrily ahead, and the tale of the by-elections, culminating in a great victory at Eccles, registered the progress. If the storms of November could be weathered the port would be won. In that month there was a clash of events all bearing on the same crucial issue. The autumn Session was to open, the O'Shea divorce trial was to take place, and the National Liberal Federation was to hold its annual meeting. All turned upon the course of the Parnell trial, and as that approached the outlook darkened. "Edward Clarke has some terribly odious material in his hands," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (November 10), "and if he uses it, our man will be destroyed, or at any rate made impossible for a long time to come. I regard it as certain that the Irish will not throw him over in any case, and if they don't, nobody else can." Harcourt was equally gloomy. "We are no sooner out of one storm than into another, and are much like Æneas in pursuit of the Samian kingdom," he replied.

Four days later (November 15) the trial began. As

Parnell offered no defence the hearing might have been limited to the production of necessary evidence, but the presentation of counter-charges against O'Shea gave the Solicitor-General, Sir Edward Clarke, acting for O'Shea, an opportunity to make a full disclosure of the relations that had existed for many years between Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea. The effect was shattering. Mr. Morley, writing to Harcourt (November 18), said :

. . . We are in about as bad a fix as Ministers were in the explosion of Pigott. Only the effects of the blow will be more lasting, as Pigott had at least the good sense to take himself off from the sublunary stage. I am most sorry of all for Mr. G. The consequences of the dirty malodorous storm will hardly clear away in his time. . . .

"Whether they are right or wrong," wrote Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt, "my belief is the Scotch will not tolerate P. in his position of quasi-partnership with the Liberal leaders." Harcourt himself had no doubt that Parnell must go. He had been present with Mr. Morley at the meetings of the National Liberal Federation at Sheffield, and writing to Gladstone he said :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

MALWOOD, November 22.— . . . I have to report to you that the opinion was *absolutely unanimous and extremely strong* that if Parnell is allowed to remain as the leader of the Irish Party all further co-operation between them and the English Liberals must be at an end. You know that the Nonconformists are the backbone of our Party, and their judgment on this matter is unhesitating and decisive.

It was with great difficulty that Morley and I dissuaded Spence Watson from pronouncing publicly to this effect as President of the Federation from the Chair at the great meeting last night. We only did so by representing to him the difficulty in which he would place us who could not speak on the subject without your authority.

I cannot express to you too clearly my conviction that the future of the Liberal Party depends on your making a very clear and authoritative declaration on the subject, and I know J. Morley agrees in this opinion.

Whether it means a severance from the Irish Party I know not, but any other course will certainly involve the alienation of the greater and better portion of the Liberal Party of Great Britain—which after all is that which we have mainly to consider.

I fear from what J. Morley tells me that there is very little hope



that P. will voluntarily withdraw himself, but we cannot wait for that. I foresee that if he appears on Tuesday at the head of the Irish Party in the House of Commons there will be an explosion amongst our friends. They are waiting only out of respect for you in order that the word may proceed from you. But they will not wait long, and I am sure that the sooner you give them the relief they so earnestly desire, the better for all parties.

I have a letter from Campbell-Bannerman who takes the same view as to Scotland.

I assure you I am giving the judgment of quiet and reasonable men and not merely of the "screamers" like Stead. It is very desirable that what is to be done should be done *quickly* and that you should not appear to be forced by others into that which they so much desire should proceed from the leader of their Party.

I wish we had the opportunity of consulting with you at this very momentous crisis of the Party, but I hope you will come up on Monday prepared to make a communication to P. *without delay* so that he may know your views before the House meets.

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN, *November 23.*—It was, I think, very wise to prevent any pronouncement at the meeting of the Federation. But the evidence obtained there is a great fact.

I have been waiting upon the time and on events, and I think both are now ripe. I have advised A. Morley to assemble you and J. Morley to-morrow, the earlier the better.

And I would recommend your sending for McCarthy and asking him whether I am to expect any communication from Mr. Parnell on the subject of the existing situation. He might be reminded, or informed, that in 1882, after the murders in Phoenix Park, he wrote to me the next day and offered to take the Chiltern Hundreds. It might be mentioned to him that the inquiry made is not officious or gratuitous, as unless something proceeds from Mr. Parnell (which would be far better) it would be necessary to make known to him that the last week had been spent in observing the evidences rife in every quarter of a profound movement of the public mind in Great Britain, to say nothing of similar indications elsewhere.

The effect of that observation, corroborated by counsel with my friends, is to convince me that the continuance of Mr. Parnell in the leadership of the Irish Party at the present moment would be, notwithstanding his splendid services to his country, so to act upon British sentiment as to produce the gravest mischief to the cause of Ireland; to place those who represent the Party in a position of irremediable difficulty; and to make the further maintenance of my own leadership for the purposes of that cause little better than a nullity.

It should be understood that in what has been said I do not con-

stitute myself a judge, in any respect or degree, of the merits of the case, but simply take note of the facts, as I conceive that I am bound to do by my duty to the Irish Party and to Ireland at large.

If it is deemed better that *this* communication should be made by me (which is not my opinion) Mr. McCarthy might be informed that I am due at No. 1, Carlton Gardens about four, and that to allow for casual delays I would ask the great favour of his calling on me about five. •

If you and Morley make the prior communication as I have proposed, it might still be well for M. to understand that I could be found at that hour should there be occasion. If you think the indication I have given as to consequences of persistence is premature, that might stand over for the next stage.

At some time or other I should desire to say for *myself* that my reliance on his exactitude and scrupulous integrity in political communications has not been impaired, and that no change in that respect enters at all into the motive of my present communications. . . .

## II

All depended on the attitude of Parnell. He had received the verdict of the Divorce Court imperturbably, and carried himself with his usual cold and haughty indifference to events. Davitt had declared against him, but the Party generally rallied to him, and from Ireland and America there came evidence of popular support. But on the English side of St. George's Channel the feeling against continued association with him was overwhelming, and on the Friday (November 21) there was reason to believe that Parnell would bow to the storm. On Monday, the day before the assembling of Parliament, Gladstone returned to London, and was visited by Justin McCarthy, to whom he communicated his views in the spirit of his letter to Harcourt, his intention being that these views should be passed on to Parnell and his followers. After McCarthy had gone he wrote a letter to Mr. Morley, not intended for publication, in which he indicated what he had said to McCarthy, and continued :

. . . I think I may be warranted in asking you so far to expand the conclusion I have given above as to add that the continuance (of Parnell's leadership) I speak of would not only place many hearty and effective friends of the Irish cause in a position of great

embarrassment, but would render my retention of the leadership of the Liberal Party, based as it has been mainly upon the presentation of the Irish cause, almost a nullity.

It was a plain issue. The Irish Party had to make a choice between sacrificing Parnell and sacrificing Gladstone, and the sympathy of the English Liberals. Unfortunately they did not know this. If there had been any weakening of Parnell on the Friday it had soon passed. During the week-end he eluded all Mr. Morley's efforts to put him in possession of Gladstone's intentions, and Justin McCarthy was quite inadequate to deal with so critical a situation. Whether he was afflicted by panic or timidity is not clear, but when the Irish Party met on Tuesday to elect a leader for the Session they were left in complete ignorance of Gladstone's attitude, and chose Parnell. The news of the decision fell like a thunderbolt upon the House which was at the moment engaged in the debate on the Address. "I was in the Lobby from 3 to 7," wrote Lewis Harcourt to Lady Harcourt, "but came away at last as I could not bear it any longer. Our men were mad, frantic, cursing, crying—the whole place in an uproar—a horrible scene which I could not stand, so I went and dined alone at the club, and read the medical papers on Koch's cure."

Meanwhile, Mr. Morley had communicated the Gladstone letter to Parnell, and Gladstone himself, profoundly moved by the blow that seemed to have wrecked the labour of years, immediately sent his letter to Mr. Morley to the Press. The Irish members, learning for the first time of the Gladstone letter and realizing how they had been tricked, revolted in large numbers, and summoned a meeting for the following day with the object of undoing their fatal work. With this decision began that prolonged and fateful struggle in Committee room No. 15 which during the ensuing days overshadowed the proceedings of Parliament itself. Parnell's strategy was equal to the emergency. He issued a manifesto in which he sought to divert the issue from the question of his own misconduct to the ground that Gladstone was

contemplating the betrayal of the Irish cause. He disclosed proposals which he said he had received from Gladstone at Hawarden in December 1889, which constituted a severe truncation of the Home Rule scheme. It was the desperate throw of a reckless man, and Gladstone's reply showed that the so-called "betrayal" was merely a discussion of points intended to explore the ground for the future. For a year this conversation had been so treated by Parnell, and Mr. Morley, who also issued a reply and who had been involved in the negotiations of December 1889, said that as late as November 10, "I was under the most distinct impression that Mr. Parnell did not object to the suggestions thrown out a year ago at Hawarden as subjects for provisional discussion." Harcourt had not been a party to the Hawarden conversation, and had protested against some of the proposals then put forward, especially against the reduction of Irish M.P.'s to thirty-three, and he now viewed with equivocal feelings the disclosure of proceedings he had not endorsed. He had never liked Parnell, and he shared neither the surprise nor the distress which this new revelation of the man occasioned to Mr. Morley. Writing to his wife, he said :

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE CLUB, *November 29.*— . . . I have seen Mr. G. this morning. He has sent his denial of the statement (Parnell's Manifesto) generally to the evening papers. The blackguardism of the man will now be patent to all the world. If what he said was true (which it is not) it would have been disgraceful to publish it. However, it is very artfully conceived, and it is possible that it may shake the majority against him on Monday.

Poor J. Morley is much cast down. To me I confess it is a relief to have done with such a rascal. I feel some satisfaction in remembering that I have never shaken hands with him. It is all very interesting, and I think may relieve us of many difficulties in the future.

"It is a very dangerous thing to approach an expiring cat," he wrote next day to Gladstone. "I do sincerely trust that no sentiment either of compassion or of policy will persuade you to do or say anything which may even savour of concession to that man. He is as the lawyers say 'in mercy,' which means that he has none to expect,

and if it were suspected even that you had let him march out with the honours of war it would create a very bad effect on the public mind." The warning was apropos of the struggle that was still going on in Committee Room 15. "The Irishmen are upstairs fighting like Kilkenny cats and coming out at intervals to have 'drinks all round,'" wrote Harcourt to his wife next day. "It is said they will not divide till midnight. The numbers are believed to be 2 to 1 against Parnell, and I hear he is raging like a wild beast at the meeting." The tide was going against him, and from America the two most powerful members of his Party, Mr. Dillon and Mr. William O'Brien, had cabled their adherence to the majority in opposition to Parnell's leadership. But Parnell fought on with the desperation of a wild animal, and the scenes in the Committee room grew in intensity as the days passed by. Parnell's new strategy was to extract terms from the Liberal leaders as the condition of his retirement. "I was with Mr. G. yesterday," wrote Harcourt to his wife (December 1), "when he saw Justin McCarthy, who, poor man, was the bearer of a message from P. proposing that Mr. G., J. Morley and I should sign a letter containing certain terms to be binding upon us in the final settlement of Home Rule which he P. undertook to keep an *inviolable* secret!! This was to be a condition of his surrender. Can you imagine that impudence could go further. You may imagine the answer which was given to this inconceivable proposal." The proposal was received on December 3, when Harcourt, in common with Gladstone and Mr. Morley, was asked to receive a deputation from the Irish Party for the discussion of the terms of a satisfactory Home Rule Bill, especially in regard to the control of the constabulary and the right of an Irish Parliament to deal with the land question. Harcourt declined to meet the Irishmen, and wrote long and fervid letters to Gladstone urging him not to be caught in the net that Parnell was spreading for his destruction.

. . . It is obvious (he said, December 5) that the retirement if it took place at all is to be only momentary. Healy himself assumes

that Parnell is to return almost immediately. This is what he said : " If Mr. Parnell felt able to meet the Party on the points put forward his voice would be the first at the very earliest possible moment consonant with the liberties of his country to call him back to his proper place as leader of the Irish race."

Whatever you do, whether Parnell retires for the moment or not, upon your acceptance of his dictation he will return long before you can bring forward a Home Rule Bill, and then you will have to deal with a man who has thus spoken of you. . . .

That day Gladstone wrote finally declining an interview with the Irishmen, but expressing confidence in the renewal of relations with them when they had settled the question of leadership. The decision brought the struggle in Committee Room 15 to an end. The majority urged Parnell to bow to the inexorable necessities of the position. He refused, and at last Justin McCarthy rose from the table and left the room, followed silently by his forty-four supporters. Parnell was left behind with twenty-six colleagues, and the breach in the Irish ranks was final and irrevocable. Harcourt, well pleased with the issue of the struggle, went down to Malwood, and writing from thence to Mr. Morley (December 9) said :

. . . Here I am in the harbour of Malwood with two anchors down and topmasts struck—*suavi mari*, with snow outside and in a comfortable warm house I have been studying the morning's papers. What a scene ! *O qualis facies et quali digna tabella !* It is one the British public will not soon forget. For us I think the issue is quite as favourable as we could have hoped. We have at least accomplished the two main objects. We have saved the Liberal Party and we have maintained the credit of the G.O.M. These are the two capital points and they cannot suffer now unless some great imprudence is committed. . . .

From the battle-field of Committee Room 15, the two Parties crossed the Irish Channel to continue the struggle in Ireland. By this time the Catholic hierarchy had declared against Parnell. " As for the battle in Ireland, which will be at the bottom between Parnell and the Bishops, I will not put any money of mine on those holy men," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (December 10). The passion of Parnell mounted as the forces opposed to him increased, and his

campaign in Ireland, with the forcible capture of the offices of *United Ireland*, and the frenzy of the Kilkenny election, assumed the character of a physical warfare. The tide went against him, and at Kilkenny his nominee was defeated. But the effect of these wild doings on the public mind in England was disastrous, and a by-election in the Bassetlaw division registered the measure of the set-back which had been given to the Liberal cause by the events of the past month. Gladstone was in the deepest despair. Writing to Harcourt (December 18) on his return from a visit to Ireland, Mr. Morley said :

. . . I called for three or four hours at Hawarden, by command, on my way home. Mr. G. was full of cold, and out of sorts, but with occasional spurts of intense passion at the wickedness of Parnell, the insensate folly of his dupes, and the want of pluck in his nominal foes. Altogether the atmosphere was rather sad and depressing. . . . Mr. G. can find no parallel in history to the present Irish dementia, except the furious quarrels among the chosen people in Jerusalem, while Titus was thundering at the gates. I suppose Florence, Pisa, etc., were as mad with faction. . . .

### III

It was a depressing Christmas for the Liberal leaders. With an election beginning to loom in sight they found themselves in a condition of apparent shipwreck, their cause discredited by their own allies, their relations with the Irish snapped asunder, the tide of public opinion that had been flowing so strongly in their favour turning against them, unable either to surrender their policy or to press it with any prospect of success. Gladstone was in deep gloom at Hawarden, but Harcourt and Mr. Morley sought to keep up each other's spirits by an unflagging exchange of letters turning upon the problem of what was to be done to keep the ship afloat. Harcourt enveloped his anger at events with plentiful flashes of fun. Referring (December 18) to "Joe's speech at Birmingham which was as nasty as usual," he says: "He wants a 'National Party' constructed for his own private advantage, like a public-house of which he is to keep the bar." "I am reading Virgil with Bobby. I desire nothing better. 'Tu regere imperio populos,'

especially the Irish people." "I see old Tollemache is dead of driving twenty miles in East wind. I shall die, but not that way" (this to his son). "I myself cultivate such stoicism as I can. Like Grattan we can say, 'We sat by its cradle, and we follow its hearse.' And I at least suffered quite as much from the pangs of its birth as I ever can from the agony of its decease." Enclosing a photograph of Malwood with himself standing at the front door, he says (December 22): "As Morley will not come to Malwood, Malwood must come to Morley. . . . You will observe that the propriétaire is looking from his front door in vain for the guest who ought to lift the closed blinds of the Morley Chamber (on the left)."

"I always find it best," he writes to Mr. Morley (December 19), "when I want to clear my head to put my thoughts on paper. I therefore enclose you an epistle nominally addressed to you, really addressed to myself, as to the conditions on which I think Home Rule possible and upon which I am prepared to advocate it." With this memorandum he opened an elaborate discussion with Mr. Morley of the prospects of Home Rule in the light of the new situation. Harcourt's main point was that Home Rule rested on two conditions:

(1) That Gladstone should have full powers to make a proposal which should command the consent of Great Britain.

(2) That there should be some authority entitled to express the assent of Ireland.

Parnell had now struck at the basis of this twofold condition. "His appeal to the Irish people rests on the denial of *all mutuality*. His demand is that Ireland alone shall prescribe the terms of H.R. That is just what Chamberlain flung in our teeth after the Round Table, and that is what we have always denied. *I have no hesitation in saying that on such conditions I am as much opposed to H.R. as anyone in the Unionist camp.*" Until the conditions 1 and 2 were restored, no progress could be made. Without them "we may mitigate the action of the British occupation, but we shall never procure evacuation."



In his reply Mr. Morley insisted on the need of a United Ireland. "I would rather see Ireland Parnellite than divided—for her own sake." He was for fighting it out, not in expectation of victory at the election, "but so as to lead our troops in decent order from the field—and what is more important, to save something of what we have gained at such great cost, by convincing the Irish that for once an English party is thoroughly to be relied on." He was against the tactics of postponement. "If I am to be beaten, I should like to face the enemy and not skulk in any ditches." To this Harcourt replied at great length, his general point being stated as follows :

... In my opinion Parnell for the time at least having fatally checked our *positive advance* in the direction of *Home Rule*, we should operate on the *negative and defensive lines* as against coercion. We can reasonably and justly maintain *that though Parnell may have made an Irish Parliament less possible in the present he has not made a policy of coercion on the part of the British Government and the British Parliament more right as against the Irish people who are guiltless of his offence.*

Mr. Morley (December 26) persisted in the wisdom of going forward. "To announce that Home Rule is no longer regarded by us as *actual*, or as practical politics would be instantly to fling the Nationalists back into Parnell's arms. It would be taken to justify Parnell's charge that Mr. G. seized the divorce as a pretext for getting rid of H.R. by getting rid of the leader. . . . I see nothing but danger, and still further discredit, if we change our line—though there are many reasons why we should supplement our Irish policy by English reforms." Harcourt's next broadside (December 27) opened :

Your observations are founded on the assumption that nothing has happened and nothing has changed, and that the split with Parnell leaves things exactly as they were. If that is so of course you are right, and there is no reason why the treatment of Home Rule should be varied in principle or in urgency.

I have the highest admiration of the *justum ac tenacem propositi virum* and of his composure in the midst of fractured worlds, but after all in practical life if an earthquake does knock down the walls

of your house and upset your kitchen fire you must sometimes put off your dinner for half an hour.

He traversed the whole ground of the changed situation and the changed tactics it required, insisting afresh on the element of mutuality as the condition of practical progress. "I am quite willing to satisfy the Irish," he concluded, "but upon one condition and that is that they satisfy us. The one term is correlative and ought to be commensurate with the other. You will never progress with Home Rule unless you give an equal impulse to both these oars—if you pull at one only you will only slew the boat round in a circle."

The inordinately long argument, carried to no definite conclusion, closed on New Year's Eve with a letter from Mr. Morley which ended: "Well, at any rate, I do very cordially wish a happy New Year to all at Malwood. You often provoke me, you occasionally exasperate me, and I really doubt whether I can join your Government, but our good relations have been the pleasantest part of the last five years."

But this cordial intercourse suffered a rude, though momentary shock a few weeks later. The confusion within the Liberal Party showed no sign of abatement, and Gladstone, Harcourt and Mr. Morley were in almost daily correspondence on the course to be pursued. The public was waiting for some declaration of policy, but Harcourt himself refused to be drawn, and urged his colleagues to mark time. He opposed a Party meeting, and was against any definite pronouncements by Gladstone or anything which would commit the Liberal Party until the Irish horizon was once more reasonably clear. Mr. Morley urged him to speak, but he said, "I have always found it a sound maxim 'when in doubt, don't.' I have often regretted having spoken, but never been sorry for having held my tongue, and at this moment I want no encouragement to be silent." "I am amused to hear that my opponents scold me because I don't speak," he wrote to a correspondent; "but I console myself still more with the reflection that they would scold

me still more if I did speak. And therefore despairing to please them either way, I shall in this seasonable weather continue to cultivate my fireside." It was a busy fireside, for his pen was engaged incessantly in discussions with Gladstone and Morley on the materials of an English policy with which to keep the Party together, and on questions to be taken up while they were marking time on the Irish question. Thus he wrote with great indignation to Gladstone (January 7, 1891) on the revelations of Stanley's African expedition, one of those "filibustering expeditions in the mixed guise of commerce, religion, geography and Imperialism, under which names any and every atrocity is regarded as permissible."

. . . An armed expedition like Stanley's (he continued) claims and exercises the power of life and death and outrage upon all with whom they meet, powers which are exercised without remorse. They enlist men whom they call carriers, but who are really slaves, driven in by contract by the established slave drivers of the country. They work these men to death, and if they are recalcitrant flog or shoot them. . . . What is really wanted is to concentrate public opinion upon the real nature of these transactions which are the worst form of piratical Jingoism. . . .

#### IV

But questions like these could not efface the great issue which held the stage, and to burke it in public became increasingly impossible. It was all the more impossible because at this moment another phase of the drama was occupying the public mind. Defeated at Kilkenny, Parnell had gone to Boulogne to meet Mr. William O'Brien, who had come from America to discuss terms upon which reconciliation could be effected on the basis of Parnell's retirement. Harcourt, always distrustful of Parnell's good faith, warned Gladstone and Mr. Morley that the negotiations were a sham, a new move on the part of Parnell to involve the Liberals in fresh difficulties and to break the Irish opposition to him into fragments. That this was his object became clear before the negotiations broke off. Meanwhile Mr. Morley had entered into negotiations with

the Anti-Parnellites, and defending himself to Harcourt wrote (January.7) :

. . . I am not exuberantly cheerful myself, but I swear that I'm more of a stoic than you. The crash to me is worse than to you. I believed in this policy, and I had some opinion of Parnell, though no illusions. It has all gone to pieces under the most ignoble circumstances, and the time may come pretty soon when the Party will curse everybody concerned. Well, I face all that. All I care for is that the Party, and Mr. G. especially, should come out of it, as little hurt as may be. After all, your view is really just the same.

A few days later (January 13) in a speech at Newcastle, he said, " For myself, win or lose, I will fight it out. When the obscuring smoke of the present strife in Ireland has rolled away, let Irishmen know that they will see the beacon of friendship and sympathy still burning clear on the English shore." He made declarations on the two subjects—the land and the constabulary—which Parnell had raised in Committee Room 15, and was raising again at Boulogne as the condition on which he left it to be inferred that he would retire. Harcourt took no objection to the Newcastle speech, but three days later (January 16) the storm which had long been gathering broke. Mr. Morley wrote to him to say that an emissary had come to him from Mr. O'Brien at Boulogne with Parnell's offer, thus :

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

1. Justin [McCarthy] as leader of the party recognized by Mr. G. is to go to Mr. G. and procure from him a written assurance for himself *and his colleagues*, as to land, police, etc.

2. This document to be secret until the Home Rule Bill appears. Then, if the Bill comes up to the mark, Parnell to produce the document as his vindication ; if the Bill falls short, the document equally to be produced, as evidence against us.

3. The document secured, then meeting of the whole party to be held—(a) to declare the election of Justin informal, (b) to elect Dillon.

4. *Tableau !* Parnell retires (i.e. from the chair) and possibly goes to America to raise money (and to figure, I suppose, as the hero of the Irish race with his bride).

All this I sent to Mr. G. He replies as follows, as I have this afternoon told Gill—

1. We must know who is the man with whom we can deal, as we dealt with Parnell.\* That is their affair, not ours; but they ought to make up their minds. We can only have responsible communications with *de facto* leader.

2. A document binding colleagues presents great difficulties.

3. On land, we can give no assurances until the Bill now before Parliament has received its final shape.

Harcourt leapt to the conclusion, on the receipt of this letter, that it meant that the Boulogne proposal was being considered. His anger boiled over in furious letters to Gladstone and Mr. Morley. To the former, after stating the proposal as he understood it, he said :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

MALWOOD, January 17.— . . . The gentleman who had the impudence to make this proposal to you must really have assumed us to be the gang of conspirators which Argyll has charged us with being. The secret document which is framed to deceive the British public, and which is to be revealed by Parnell if the Home Rule Bill is up to the mark, to vindicate himself and to be disclosed by the other side if we turn out to be the rogues they suspect, is really worthy of the "Beggars Opera."

I feel sure you have left these gentlemen, who propose to us to play the game of Home Rule with marked cards, in no doubt as to the reception they will meet if they ever should send you such a missive. I can hardly bear to think or speak with patience of their daring to suppose we should be parties to such an infamous intrigue.

This proposal is substantially identical with that which, when I met Justin McCarthy with you in Carlton Gardens, we summarily rejected. But more than that—it is the proposal which was deliberately discussed by the ex-Cabinet in your room at the House of Commons when we came to the unanimous resolution which you recorded in your letter that you would not even meet the delegates to discuss the details of Home Rule in connection with the leadership of the Irish Party. We then declared that Home Rule and all questions concerning it were entirely outside the question of the leadership so far as we were concerned, and that it rested exclusively with the Irish Party to determine it without any conditions or assurances on our part in relation to Parnell's retirement. . . .

I am going up to London on Monday to see John Morley in order to make sure that he has not left O'Brien or his emissary under any misconception or expectation that such a proposal could ever be entertained. I am, I confess, a little alarmed at seeing in to-day's paper that O'Brien speaks of Morley's speech at Newcastle as being in a sense favourable to his terms. This would indeed be to confirm

Chamberlain's unjust representation that Morley had knuckled under to all Parnell's demands. This is a matter so vital in my judgment to the character of the Party and certainly individually to myself that I cannot afford to remain in any doubt upon the subject. Even to appear to be treating with the Irish at the present moment as to terms not made known publicly to our own people would deservedly cover us with disaster and disgrace.

In his letter to Mr. Morley, Harcourt was even more tempestuous. "What I confess alarms and disappoints me," he said, "is that such a proposal or even the suggestion of it should not have been at once extinguished by a peremptory negative such as you would present to a gentleman who asked you to be his partner on the understanding that he marked the cards. . . . Why are *we* to pay a price for Parnell's retirement? Why are we to say or do anything which we should not have done if he had not disgraced himself? . . . If he should go, is anyone stupid enough to suppose that the Irish and the English people will not demand to receive an answer to the question, What is the price that has been paid or received? If we have got anything new to say (which I am not aware that we have) let it be said and done *coram publico*, in the light of day and not as a part of a bargain or a squalid intrigue. I for one will be no party to buying off this Gaul of Eltham with pledges. He will return upon us with his *vae victis* and cast some other fire-escape into the scale." Gladstone's reply to the fusillade from Malwood was couched in a tone of sweet reasonableness:

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN, *January 19.*—So you have abandoned the charms of your fireside! I ask myself, why? But my vision is doubtless dimmed by the fact that I am still here, and toasting myself to the best of my ability from morning onwards.

However, apart from the question of the moment, for going and coming, I cannot but agree with you that the circumstances are very grave, as indeed they have been ever since the Divorce Court of last November.

There never, I think, was a time when we had greater need for insight, care, and calmness. But my imagination is less active than yours; and I think I derive more comfort from greater faith in the

combined powers of counsel, which we can bring to bear upon difficulties as they arise.

There is hardly a proposition in your letter which, taken in itself, I should question : and the same sentence applies to your most able and telling letter recently printed.

Yet, in my inner consciousness, I do not seem mentally to come to close quarters with the question in exactly the same *attitude* as you.

Like you, I shrink from the notion of secret agreements ; I view leadership and Home Rule as things perfectly distinct. . . . I mistrust entirely the O'Brien proceedings, and have no faith in their results ; I think the arguments against disclosures (of what in fact is not yet formed) stronger than ever, and I cannot conceive even confidential conversation on Irish land, if of a definite kind, as possible until we know how the law is to stand under the present Purchase Bill.

On the other hand, though Home Rule may be killed by another hand, e.g. by Parnell, I am most anxious to have nothing to do with the killing of it, on public and on personal grounds ; for, though nothing would be so acceptable to me as political death, I am not at liberty to say with Dido : *Sic, sic, juvat ire sub umbras*.

I look at Ireland through the majority of the constitutional representatives of the country favourable to Home Rule. They have deposed Parnell. I will not, and I think ought not, to suppose it possible that the country will disown its Parliamentary Party . . . I think Healy and his friends have the strongest claims, political and moral, on both our consideration and our support.

Whether we shall be able to steer the ship through the rocks and the shallows, I do not know, but I know nothing in our antecedents to import doubt among ourselves ; and the worst that ought to befall us, . . . is honourable defeat with the ranks of our Party unbroken. . . .

I suppose the snow is up to your first-floor windows. With us it is just sputtering afresh.

Mr. Morley did not take the Malwood reproaches in the same mild spirit. He wrote :

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

January 18.—The whole tone and spirit of your letter No. 2 of yesterday, convinces me that a meeting between you and me would do harm and not good, and you will therefore forgive me if I do not keep your appointment.

I entirely agree with you as to the utterly impracticable nature of the proposal. I conveyed that view to the persons concerned in the plainest words. What have you to complain of ? I believe that the Party has made up its mind that I do not fall short in that " honesty, straightforwardness and common sense " which you impressively

urge upon me ; but I think it possible to convey sensible decisions in reasonable and considerate terms.

The vehemence and reproach of your language to me is wholly unjustified. It is better that whatever discussion is now necessary should take place in the presence of our colleagues. . . .

Harcourt, full of contrition, expressed "the greatest pain at the thought that I have caused you annoyance":

. . . I must plead in excuse that I wrote under a feeling of extreme irritation at the nature of the proposal made to us and under the belief—evidently a false one—that Mr. G.'s answer to it had not negatived it or discouraged it, but the reverse. This was due either to some defect in expression or more probably to my own stupidity.

That, however, is not material. My main object is to remove from the mind of the best friend I have the notion that I intended or thought I was giving him pain, and to make reparation if I have.

Loulou will bring you this letter. Pray let me have my No. 2 that it may be burned and be as if it had never been.

Cordial relations were at once restored, but Mr. Morley insisted (January 21) that there was an issue that must now be settled. "Is our attitude on Irish affairs to be that indicated in my Newcastle speech or that of your letter to Mr. Gladstone and me?" Events themselves were shaping the answer. The Boulogne negotiations were breaking down, leaving the Anti-Parnellites more emphatically representative of the Irish majority. A Liberal victory at Hartlepool at this point restored Liberal confidence in the future. "The Hartlepool victory has spread a holy calm over the scene," wrote Harcourt to his wife. In these changing circumstances, the Home Rule issue began to emerge from the clouds of Parnellism, and Harcourt himself, with Spencer, Ripon and Mr. Morley, became a party to the formal assurance settled in Gladstone's room at the House of Commons and presented to Justin McCarthy as the leader of the Anti-Parnellites. These negotiations were specifically dissociated from any dealings with Parnell, and in the midst of them the Boulogne conversations broke off, and Parnell started on the last phase of his desperate struggle for power. Physically broken, rejected in England, in Ireland and in America, he fought his forlorn battle



with the fury of despair. He was defeated at election after election in Ireland, and it became clear that at the general election he would be left with a following that could be numbered on the fingers of one hand. But the imperious temper of the man was unbroken. There was only one possible end to so doomed and defiant a spirit. It came in the autumn. "The startling news of Parnell's death reached us this moment," wrote Harcourt to his wife from Berwickshire (October 7). "What an event and big with what consequences." Speaking at Glasgow next day, he said, "Gentlemen, the voice of criticism and controversy is hushed to-day. It is to be hoped that many bitter memories will be buried for ever, that the unhappy discussions which have raged around him may henceforth be allayed, that the wounds of that distressful country, to which he in times gone by rendered service greatly valued and which will be long remembered, may at last be healed."

## CHAPTER VII

### HARCOURT IN OPPOSITION

Disputations with Chamberlain—Licensing clauses of the Local Government Bill of 1888—Appointment of magistrates—An attempt to introduce Compensation through the Budget—Harcourt's victory on Tithe—Quarrel with Chamberlain over free education—The powers of juries—Irish Land Purchase again—Financial controversy with Goschen—Real and personal Estate—Holding over of surpluses—Newfoundland and the Fisheries Arbitration—The Triple Alliance—French suspicions of English policy—The House of Lords question begins to take shape.

FROM a parliamentary point of view it is doubtful whether any part of his career gave Harcourt more satisfaction than the years from 1886 to 1892. He was always happier out of harness than in. Office meant restraints and compromises, accommodations with this colleague and surrenders to that, and to his tempestuous and imperious temperament these things were hard to bear. In opposition he had more freedom to go his own way and fight his own battles, and as combat was the vocation for which nature had equipped him it was in opposition that he found the happiest field for the exercise of his gifts and his tastes. He was now at the zenith alike of his power and his influence. Gladstone was still easily the most commanding figure in the House of Commons; but he was old, he remained in public life in order to promote one cause alone, and in the general cut-and-thrust of the parliamentary struggle he was little more than a spectator. His partial withdrawal from the conflict and his frequent absences left Harcourt with the main burden of Opposition, and the record of the Parliament is largely a record of his

conflicts with Mr. Balfour on Ireland, Goschen on finance, Ritchie on local government and Chamberlain on any subject that provided an issue. With the last named he still preserved that agreeable private intercourse which had co-existed with their public disputations. They pounded each other mercilessly on the platform and in Parliament, and then were found fraternizing at Malwood as though they had not a disagreement in life. Thus, on the second reading of the Local Government Bill, Harcourt made (April 20, 1888) one of his most hilarious assaults on Chamberlain. "The news spread in ever-widening circles through the precincts of the House that Harcourt was, 'up' 'giving it to Chamberlain,' " said the *Observer* in describing the episode, "and before many of Sir William's treasured impromptus had been wasted on the empty benches the House was full, and the glad sounds of cheers and laughter filled the Chamber. . . . As a personal attack nothing so happily conceived, so brilliant in point and so light in touch-and-go has for years been heard in the House of Commons." It is not possible to recapture the spirit of such a speech, for it lived largely in the circumstances of the moment, but it still makes the sober pages of *Hansard* burst into merriment with this sort of gay persiflage :

. . . I do not complain at all that my Rt. Hon. Friend the Member for West Birmingham should have pronounced a panegyric upon the measure of the Government. That is easy to be understood ; indeed, it was natural because he explained to the House that the plan was his own. I have observed that my Rt. Hon. Friend is always given to the most unbounded admiration of the plans which he himself has originated, and the most unbounded criticisms of the plans of anybody else. He said that three years ago it was his duty to propose a Bill. He said his own draft was, in its main principle, in entire agreement with the Government Bill. Then the Government Bill is a mirror in which he sees his own face, and, seeing his own face, he naturally falls down and worships it. There are some defects, it is true, in the Bill, but then I suppose they are only flaws in the mirror. . . .

His relations to the Government are of a conjugal character, and a man very often thinks himself at liberty to find fault with his own wife when he allows nobody else to do so. . . . He administers his doses in different degrees. It is always treacle for the Govern-

ment, pepper for the Liberals, but he gives the sourest vinegar to the Radicals. We have heard recently of the diplomacy the Rt. Hon. Gentleman has shown on the other side of the Atlantic, but I am sorry he has left those great qualities behind him there. It reminds me of what was said of the witches and warlocks of old—when they crossed the water their power of enchantment ceased. . . .

Chamberlain took his revenge a little later (May 13) when, replying to a speech of Harcourt's at Croydon, he said :

. . . He is the *Major Dalgetty* of modern politics, and there is a boisterous humour about him which makes it very difficult to be angry with him or to take seriously anything which he may be pleased to say. Sir William Harcourt, like his great prototype, that other soldier of fortune, deals his blows in such a fashion that whilst he is belabouring us we cannot doubt that he would have an equal or even greater pleasure in slashing at his present employers, if his term of service with them had happened to have expired. . . .

A few days later Chamberlain was spending the Whitsuntide recess with Harcourt in the New Forest, and the Press was filled with speculations in regard to this "little glimpse of Arcadia" in which these formidable knights-errant, tired for the moment of knight-errantry, "may have been playing the part of shepherds." The meeting at Malwood at this time was the more significant because Harcourt and Chamberlain were at issue on crucial questions raised by the measure then before Parliament. It is not necessary to enter into the details of the Local Government Bill of 1888, which set up county council government in England and constituted the larger cities counties by themselves. Under this scheme the reform of London government, with which Harcourt had himself sought to deal while he was at the Home Office, was carried out by the abolition of the Metropolitan Board of Works and the establishment of the London County Council. With the general objects of the Bill Harcourt and the Liberals were in sympathy ; but there was one proposal to which the strongest objection was taken. In connection with the transfer to the County Councils of powers relating to the control of licenses, it was provided that where the renewal of licenses was refused compensation was to be given, such compensation to be

settled by arbitration, and to be the difference between the value of the house with and without the license. This proposal to create a vested interest in annual licenses was widely resented, by no one more than by Harcourt. Speaking at York (April 12), he said :

. . . The Bill has this merit that it offers the principle of local option, the principle for which we have long contended. . . . But you never see the Tories concede a really good Liberal principle without devising some means with which they think they will be able to defeat it ; and so they have done with local option. They have introduced the compensation clauses, they have endeavoured to build up a system by which the locality will have a pecuniary interest, not in diminishing, but in increasing the facilities for drinking. I believe that to be an entirely false principle. There is no vested interest in law in licenses at all ; with the exception of a limited class of licenses, there is no restraint upon the discretion of the magistrates ; and as regards these clauses I for one—and I speak for myself personally—think them totally objectionable.

It was on this vital subject that Harcourt had attacked Chamberlain, who had said that in his (Chamberlain's) draft bill of 1883, which never came before the Liberal Cabinet, there was a clause for compensating the publican whose license was removed without fault on his part. To this Harcourt, in his speech of April 20, replied :

. . . The Rt. Hon. Member for West Birmingham told us that more than one Government had been advised that the publicans had a vested interest in their licenses. All I can say is that no Government with which I was connected had ever such advice given to them. . . . The Government which was in office in 1883 had to deal with this question. . . . It fell to me to make a statement on behalf of the Government, and I then said that there was an unquestionable power in the magistrates—a discretion, no doubt, judicially exercised, but not confined to the personal conduct of the holder of the license—to refuse the renewal of licenses without any reference to compensation whatever. . . . What is the effect of this doctrine of vested interest which the Government desire to hang round the neck of this nation ? Why, it means hundreds of millions of pounds. There are, I believe, 180,000 licensed houses. Will anybody say that the average public-house would not be worth £1,000 ? If you once pass these compensation clauses you can never do anything in the future in the direction of temperance. You are better off as you are now. You have only got to convert the justices of England with their present jurisdiction. . . . I am happy to think that day by

day they are doing their duty in this respect more than they have done in the past, for it is in consequence of the *laches* of the justices in giving licenses in excess, and in refusing to take them away when there were more than enough, that we have found ourselves in our present position. But if you give these compensation clauses you will, it is true, place this power nominally in the hands of the County Council, but you will place it under conditions in which it will be impossible that it will ever be effectually administered. . . . In the constitution of the United States there is a provision that any infringement of property by a State law is unconstitutional and may be set aside. . . . In the State of Arkansas a law has recently been passed abolishing licensing and public-houses altogether, and certain persons thereby affected appealed to the Supreme Court to get a direction that the law was unconstitutional as being an infringement of their rights of property.

He quoted the judgment of the Supreme Court that the power of the State to safeguard the health and morals of the community, "cannot be burdened with the condition that the State must compensate such individual owners for pecuniary losses they may sustain by reason of their not being permitted, by a noxious use of their property, to inflict injury on the community." Harcourt hoped the House of Commons would take the same view.

He carried the attack on the compensation clauses into the country, addressing great meetings at Golcar and Croydon chiefly on the menace of this "terrible liability." In the Liberal Committee which sat on the Bill he carried the policy of extirpating the licensing clauses *en bloc* from the Bill. "You don't know what trouble I have had," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "in screwing up the G.O.M. (he believed in the Solicitor-General) and (low be it spoken) even Sir Wilfrid Lawson to the sticking point of no surrender." But he succeeded. Feeling in the country was hostile to the proposals, and a by-election at Southampton, fought largely on the compensation issue, resulted in a great victory for the Liberals. "I believe in the truth of what I maintained," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley, "that Temperance is the backbone of the Liberal Party *vice* Nonconformity retired." The Liberal Unionists took alarm at

the omens, and declared against the obnoxious clauses, and in the end they were dropped from the Bill. It was a conspicuous victory, and Harcourt's share in it did much to establish that popularity with the rank and file of the Party which was so marked a feature of his later years. In the course of the controversy on the Bill he made a strong indictment of the practice of appointing magistrates for political considerations, and said that the power of the lord-lieutenants in the matter "had been and was now so greatly abused that there must be a reform." Lord Dartmouth, the Lord-Lieutenant of Staffordshire, wrote to him asking whether he "alluded to the appointment of magistrates in the County of Stafford now or for many years past?" In the course of his reply Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Lord Dartmouth.*

June, 1888.— . . . I spoke more particularly of the case of counties where the appointments are made by the lord-lieutenant. I do not consider that the system even in boroughs is at all satisfactory, though modified by the practice of referring the appointments to the town councils. The ground of my objection is that I have observed that on the county benches there is a most undue predominance of one particular class of society and most often of one particular religious creed and political opinion. This I regard as a great evil and tending to diminish the confidence which ought to exist on the part of all sections of the community in the administration of justice. I also stated that the selection of magistrates seemed to be made rather with respect to social position and often to political considerations than to special fitness for judicial duties. It is not uncommon, I think, that young men of high birth and position without any experience are placed on the Bench when maturer and more experienced persons in humbler grades of life are passed over. . . . I made no particular reference to the County of Stafford as my remarks were meant to be of a general and not of a personal character. I look forward to the result of the Local Government Bill, with its proclaimed democratic principles as likely to open the way for a reform of this scandal by securing the appointment of magistrates through some authority representative of the general sentiment of all classes of the community ; and I should gladly see the proposal adopted to transfer the powers of the lord-lieutenant to the chairman of the County Council, who will be responsible to his fellow-citizens in the county for the mode in which this patronage is exercised.

Harcourt followed up the victory over the compensation proposals by driving the question home in speeches at Belper (June 20) and Stockport, and later in the year (October 9) he spoke on the subject at a meeting of the United Kingdom Alliance at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. At the Manchester meeting he declared—apropos of the statement in the Press that this was the first occasion that a statesman of his rank had identified himself with the temperance party—that he had been converted to local option as the solution of the drink question by his experience as Home Secretary of the terrible evils which had their source in drink. He discussed at greater length and with a more imposing show of authorities than he had given in the House of Commons the question of whether compensation had any legal basis, and concluded :

. . . I am not myself against a fair compromise in the settlement of great public controversies. For my part I should be glad to consider any reasonable proposal which would reconcile the public and the private interests in this matter. But it is not a reasonable proposal to found upon an annual license a claim for redemption on the basis of perpetual right. I should be very glad to see this question settled, but I am here in your name to declare that it never can be settled upon the basis of the defunct clauses. . . . The principle of local option and the right of the people to control the liquor traffic is established by a concession of both great parties in the State. That can never be revoked. What we have to do is to insist that this principle should be carried into effect without delay.

Harcourt's view on the legal aspect of the annual license was sustained in the Courts later in the year. The Solicitor-General, Sir Edward Clarke, had been responsible for the misinterpretation of the law on which the compensation clauses had been based. His opinion that license holders were entitled to compensation was carried to appeal in the test case of *Sharp v. Wakefield*. The Court of Appeal decided (December 15, 1888) that magistrates had an absolute discretion to refuse the renewal of any license at the end of any twelve months for which it had been granted, on reason shown. This decision was confirmed in the House of Lords on March 19, 1891.



In the meantime there had been another attempt by the Government to introduce the principle of compensation in the extinction of licenses. The Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Bill of 1890 sought to embody the Budget proposals of Goschen for buying out the goodwill of licenses which the holders were willing to give up. It was proposed under this scheme to spend £350,000 a year in the extinction of licenses. Harcourt again led the attack on the proposal. Speaking on the first reading (May 15, 1890), he said :

. . . What would any country gentleman opposite think of a tenant for life, who, under the terms of a settlement, was strictly forbidden from making leases for more than seven years, who, at the end of his period of management, turned round and said, " I have so managed affairs as to grant to every tenant on the estate a freehold interest ? " . . . This purchase operation of yours, involving an outlay of £350,000 a year, will act like the Sinking Fund, which keeps up the price of consols, for it will keep up the price of public-houses all over the country in the interests of the great breweries. . . . The evil which you are doing by this Bill, in my opinion, is that you are giving a practical recognition by Statute to a portentous monopoly. . . . You are creating by implication in this Bill a freehold property of millions of money which will hang like a mill-stone round the neck of society in this country, and that is an enormous evil. . . .

" We are fighting like the braves at Thermopylæ, and I think the Persian hosts will come to grief " he wrote to Sir Thomas Farrer on June 19. His anticipation was fulfilled. The cause of compensation was beaten out of field in Parliament and the courts alike, and it was not until a dozen years later that a Conservative Government returned to the policy once more and established the principle of a freehold interest in annual licenses, and the payment of compensation for their extinction.

## II

In another skirmish with the Government, in the Session of 1889, Harcourt achieved a personal triumph which greatly enhanced his prestige with the Party. Late in the Session a Tithe Rent Charge Recovery Bill was brought in. It dealt with tithe rent charge recoverable at law, but left

untouched the question of the responsibility of payment as between landlord and tenant. When the motion to go into Committee on the Bill came on in August, Harcourt was leading the Opposition in the absence of Gladstone, and he fell on the Bill with unimpeded impetus. "Nothing could exceed the skill or the adroitness of his operations," said the *Observer* (August 18) in describing the course of the struggle. "It has been a momentous epoch in his (Harcourt's) career, finally settling the always vexed question of the succession to Mr. Gladstone's leadership in the House of Commons . . . quick to see a point, happy in phraseology, brief in speech, he has invariably said the right thing in the right way at the right time." In a less friendly comment on Harcourt's victory, the *Spectator* (August 24) observed :

. . . Somehow it is impossible to keep away from the phrases of the Old Testament when speaking of Sir William Harcourt. The feeble phrases of modern life are altogether insufficient to describe him. It is to the book of Job that we naturally turn for a comparison. Sir William Harcourt leading the Opposition to the Tithes Bill reminds us of nothing so much as Leviathan. "His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot ; he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment. He beholdeth all high things ; he is a king over all the children of pride." The parallel is exact. . . . And this time Leviathan has won, which, great and wonderful as he is, he has not always been able to do.

Under the compulsion of his assault, the Attorney-General (Webster) undertook to insert an amendment, substituting the owner for the occupier as the person against whom proceedings for recovery could be taken. It was a fatal concession. Harcourt promptly asked the Speaker whether it was competent for the House to proceed on a new Bill made out of an old one. The Speaker held that where a Bill was so transformed a new one must be brought in, and Harcourt's triumph was complete. He had not only got the admission that the owner was liable, but in getting it he had killed the Bill itself. "That quite clear," said the *Observer*, "Sir William Harcourt's whole manner

changed. On the instant he became the chief mourner over the stillborn Bill foreshadowed by the amendment of the Attorney-General. It was the dearest object of his heart, the apple of his eye. . . . The Bill he had fought all the week was dead, and no one could say he had done it. On the contrary, he had extolled its merits (in its amended form), and with tears in his eyes besought the Government not to abandon it by the wayside."

"I don't know which to admire most," wrote Spencer to him (August 18) from Homburg, "your searching and crushing criticisms, or your magnanimous offers of support when you had vanquished your enemy and had him at your mercy." Harcourt himself was exultant over the "roaring time" he had had. "It has been a glorious three days," he wrote to his wife at Malwood. "It was worth all the sacrifice I made for it. For me personally it has been a vast success, as the Party gave me all the honours of it, and even the rebellious Storey saluted me as 'our leader.' " "*Veni, vidi, vici*," he wrote to his son. "I administered the fatal blow to the Tithes Bill to-day, and it is dead as mutton. . . . It has been a brilliant run and a fine kill in the open." To Mr. Morley, who was in Devonshire "putting the final strokes to my little *Walpole*," he wrote :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, August 19.—"Pends-toi, brave Crillon, on a vaincu sans toi." We have had a real sporting week in the H. of C. and run into our fox in the open. There was no fault which the Government did not commit. We thoroughly out-debated them on Monday and Tuesday, and drove them out of their lines. They tried to change front in the presence of the enemy, and then we smote them in the flank. It was really like a chapter in the Peninsular War, and was great fun. The rout was complete, and we captured all their colours and cannon. With incredible folly they left the conduct of a measure which treads on all the corns of the agricultural interest to Webster and Matthews, who don't know the difference between a turnip and a cabbage, and hardly distinguish between a parson, a squire and a farmer. The ignorance displayed by these gents of the sentiments of their own Party was quite comical. Hicks-Beach sat sulky and fuming in a corner, whilst votes were forced down the throats of the county members which will empty many a saddle at the general

election. They will never be forgiven for proposing to county court the tenant farmer for tithes.

Altogether it has been a very "nasty one" for the Government and the Session has gone out like a tallow candle with an ill savour. . . . Thank God the Session is over, and we are down at Malwood for life. . . .

But Harcourt's victory, though singularly complete in itself, was not final. When in the following Session, the Government brought forward a revised Bill, nominally conceding Harcourt's demand that the owner and not the occupier should be the person against whom proceedings for recovery of tithe should lie, it was found to be short of the undertaking. Harcourt insisted that the Bill did not completely transfer the burden of paying the rent-charge from the occupier to the owner, or abolish the process of distress, nor did it arrange for the diminution of the tithe where this was necessary. He declared that the tithe in fact became rent and a personal debt to the landlord, who would have the right to distrain. In these circumstances he returned to the attack with the same formidable energy that he had displayed in regard to the previous Bill, fighting the battle of the tenants not only in Parliament, but on the platform and in letters to the Press. In the end the leader of the House, W. H. Smith, asked him to meet Hicks-Beach with a view to settling amendments to the Bill, and Gladstone was disposed to agree to that course. Harcourt, however, declined to make himself responsible for the Government measure. Writing to Gladstone (July 2), he said :

. . . Any such action on my part which would be regarded as "squaring and being squared" by the Government would be wholly useless and carry with it no weight or authority in our Party.

Troops will follow their officers when they lead them on, but may very likely shoot them in the back when they run away.

I think you are under some mistake as to the feeling of our Welsh M.P.'s on this question. Their hostility is absolute and irreconcilable, and they would greatly resent any such transaction on our part as that proposed. They are already too suspicious of us, and such a proceeding would convert their suspicions into certainty. . . .

The hostility of Harcourt again triumphed, and the Bill was withdrawn. In the following year, the Government brought in a third Bill on the subject, and this time they were successful. Harcourt was again constantly in his place, taking up minute points that arose in connection with the measure, but he no longer aimed at defeating it, for it conceded what he had fought for throughout. In reviewing the history of the struggle in Committee, he said :

. . . The Bill of 1889 was a most unjust measure, for it proposed to throw the whole burden on the tenant farmers of England. We, however, opposed it, and were fortunate enough to defeat it. Then came the Bill of 1890, which also in our opinion contained many provisions which were extremely oppressive with regard to the occupiers, and this Bill we likewise defeated. The result is the present Bill, which in point of fact embodies the principle for which we contended. . . .

### III

“What a marching life is mine,” said Charlemagne, and Harcourt could have applied the saying to himself without exaggeration. The sounds of combat were rarely absent from his path, and most public issues in which he was engaged resolved themselves into personal duels which he fought with enormous enjoyment. No period of his career was more prolific in these encounters than that covered by this Parliament. In one of these his private relations with Chamberlain suffered a temporary eclipse that threatened them with a final rupture. In the debate on the Address in 1890, Mr. (Sir) Arthur Acland referred to the absence of any reference to free education, and in the course of the debate that followed Chamberlain said he should vote against Mr. Acland’s motion, because the Government had accepted the principle of free education, and had promised to deal with it when they had the opportunity. He was not prepared to displace a Government pledged to free education in order to substitute for it a Government pledged only to postpone free education and other reforms to a project of constitutional change which would probably take years to carry out. Harcourt taunted him with the abandonment

of his earlier principles, and the temper of the House rose high as the two combatants exchanged verbal blows with unusual asperity. Harcourt reminded Chamberlain that he had pledged himself in 1885 to take office in no Government which would not carry out free education. He then joined the Government of 1886, presumably because he knew they intended to carry free education. Chamberlain retaliated that his pledge had been not to join a Government which "excluded these proposals from its programme."

There are glimpses of the temper of the discussion in the subsequent letters that passed between Harcourt and Mr. Morley. "J. C., with the face of a demon, told me on Friday night that I owed him an apology for my violent demeanour towards him during your speech," wrote the latter (February 23). "I saw he was 'going for you.' on the bench," replied Harcourt, "and like a wise man kept out of his way as probably, if he had borrowed a bowie-knife from his American connections, he might have eviscerated me. . . . I nearly burst out laughing as I was speaking at seeing H. James holding down J. C. by main force as he was writhing with rage and nearly flying at my throat."

There followed a heated exchange of letters, in which Chamberlain said that the continuance of Harcourt's provocation in debate would in the end make it impossible to maintain the old friendly relations. Harcourt replied that Chamberlain's support of the Government in dropping free education, and his scornful attack on the Liberals who had protested against that proceeding, had called forth his own retort; but he admitted that he had overstated Chamberlain's declaration in 1885. "It is possible that I spoke more warmly than was necessary," he said, "but I confess that I did feel very strongly as to the line you adopted and the language you employed towards us." Chamberlain insisted that he had not been aggressive in tone, and said that in mediæval civil wars it had been the practice of old personal friends when they met in battle "to salute and pass on," seeking other combatants. In

the end they agreed to meet and talk over free education. "It was not until the following year that the boon was conceded, and then it came by a side issue. Goschen's grant from the probate duty in relief of local rates was applied in the Scottish Local Government Act of 1889 to the payment of school fees. What had been given to Scotland could not long be withheld from England and Wales. The proposal in 1891 to extend it to England was welcomed by the clerical friends of the voluntary schools, who feared that if action was deferred until a Liberal Government came into power, fees in board schools only would be paid and voluntary schools would be starved out. From these mixed motives, the Free Education Act of 1891 became law, and school fees were abolished, to the mutual satisfaction of Harcourt and Chamberlain, although the satisfaction of the former was clouded by the absence of the principle of popular control for the new policy.

Another controversy in which he was engaged at this time attracted much attention. Harcourt had a great passion for the law, but a still greater passion for liberty, and as his career at the Home Office had shown, he had no special reverence for the sanctity of judges. In a debate on the Jury Law (Ireland) Bill on May 14, 1890, Mr. (now Mr. Justice) Darling quoted from an Irish pamphlet which asserted that "the jury in a criminal case had an unquestionable right to find a verdict of guilty or not guilty on the law and facts of the case without regard to the direction and instructions of the judge." On the reading of this quotation Harcourt ejaculated "Hear, hear," whereupon Mr. Darling said :

Did not the Rt. Hon. Gentleman know that when juries disregard the direction of the judge upon a point of law their verdict would be set aside, and there was no limit to the number of times in which the case might be set down for trial until the jury learnt what the Rt. Hon. Gentleman had not as yet begun to appreciate—that they had no right to disregard the direction of the judge on a matter of law.

Harcourt could not allow to pass without challenge "a statement of which a layman ought to be ashamed."

The statement which had been challenged was this—that a jury in a criminal trial had no right to find a verdict irrespective of the direction of the judge. He should have thought that there was no English citizen who did not know that that right was the foundation of our liberties.

There followed a discussion in *The Times* in which Harcourt pounded his opponent with an overwhelming array of authorities on the question of the unrestricted rights of juries. He showed that in the England of the past the independence of juries had acted as a practical check on the harsh administration of the law, and that, especially in political trials, it had helped to secure the constitutional rights of English citizens. Justice Maule's saying, "You are a British jury, and you can do what you please," was, he said, nothing less than a compendious formula for the liberty of the subject. "On that the whole thing depends. If Mr. Justice Maule's predecessors on the Bench had been 'able to do what they pleased,' we might by this time have been almost in the condition in which the Russian citizens find themselves to-day." He enlivened the controversy by recalling and correcting a quotation by Mansfield with which the judge sought to fortify his erroneous decision in the case of the Dean of St. Asaph. Mansfield had recalled Pulteney's ballad :

For Sir Philip well knows  
That his innuendoes  
Will serve him no longer  
In verse or in prose,  
For twelve honest men have decided the cause,  
Who are judges of fact, though not judges of laws.

"Unfortunately for Lord Mansfield," said Harcourt, "this was one of the rare occasions on which that great judge was wrong both 'on the facts and the law,' for the true version of the last line of the stanza ran as follows—'Who are judges alike of the facts *and the laws.*'" In commenting on the controversy, the *Birmingham Daily Post* expressed the plain view of the matter when it said (June 9), "Which-ever side has in logic the better of the argument, liberty is



on the side of Sir William Harcourt. . . . Mr. Darling's theory would have upset the acquittal of the Seven Bishops. . . . In trials for political offences it would be a sore blow at liberty and the freedom of the subject if juries were to understand that the judge's statement of the law is arbitrary direction, and not, as we believe it to be, merely expert assistance."

## IV

"If you don't come down here this Easter I will never return to London," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley from Malwood (April 1, 1890). "There is a menace for you. You have no idea how superior the blackbirds are when compared with the Welsh members." But Mr. Morley did not go to Malwood. He went to Ireland instead to "grind up" Mr. Balfour's new Land Purchase Bill which was creating some disagreement among the Liberal leaders. Mr. Morley wrote to Harcourt on the Good Friday that he had seen Gladstone, who "would like to damn it (the Bill) wholly. He spoke bitterly of the Land Bill of 1886 as the worst political failure he had ever associated himself with." Mr. Morley himself, after examination in Dublin, found the Bill very vulnerable, but he urged Harcourt not to "shut the door to purchase" entirely, especially as Mr. Haldane and Sir Edward Grey were disposed to support the Bill. But Harcourt was immovable. "I am living the life of a Hants squireen scratching my pigs and picking my flowers," he told Mr. Morley (April 8); but he mingled these bucolic pleasures with strenuous letters to *The Times*, in which he protested against land purchase being "sustained on the tortoise of British credit," and attacked Chamberlain for his support of a policy he had so bitterly opposed four years before. Chamberlain had rested his opposition to the Gladstone Bill on the fundamental principle that British credit should not be pledged for the Irish landlords, and had argued, "as it seemed to me with great force, that 'whatever security was considered good enough for the British Government

ought to be good enough for the Irish landlords.' . . . But as soon as a Tory Government proposes to rest the fabric of Irish land purchase on the final tortoise of English consols, Mr. Chamberlain not only becomes the enthusiastic supporter of [the plan, but waxes bitter against anyone who hesitates to approve it." Chamberlain, replying in *The Times* (April 16), said :

. . . When Sir William Harcourt goes abroad, I have no doubt he takes with him a letter of credit from his banker, which the latter has given to him on the strength of the balance which Sir William has left in his hands. Does Sir William Harcourt consider that under these circumstances his expenditure on the continent rests finally on the tortoise of his banker's credit. . . .

Harcourt retaliated (*The Times*, April 19) that the banker abroad to whom he presented his letter of credit knew nothing of him, but looked to his banker at home as his security, and recalled Chamberlain's argument on the Gladstone Land Purchase Bill of 1886 :

. . . I should make it a cardinal principle in any future legislation that if this security is good enough for the British Exchequer and for English and Scotch taxpayers, it is good enough for the Irish landlords, and in any future scheme I believe it will be found impossible to put the risk upon any but the right shoulders—in fact to keep the risk where it is at present.

The duel was resumed in the House on the second reading of the Bill, when Chamberlain described Harcourt as one "who is always under the unfortunate delusion that everybody in the world is inconsistent except himself." Harcourt retorted that Chamberlain had produced "many plans, all ingenious, all remarkable, but all different." Dealing with the Bill he insisted that if the rents in Ireland were 20 per cent too high, they ought to be reduced without pledging national resources. The British taxpayer, he said, was to advance thirty-three million sterling on Irish land at a price that could not be obtained in the market, and to receive on it a rent 20 per cent less than it now yielded. The safeguards proposed against famine years were like the walls of sand a child built up, one round another, on the

seashore, until a wave came and swept them away. The rents would have to be collected under a regime of coercion. There was no real security except the consols which were at the back of purchase. If these proposals were forced upon the Irish tenants against their will he asserted that there would be no dishonour in their repudiation. The Government were creating a precedent which would be equally sound for every other demand of a similar character.

Harcourt's determined opposition to the Bill brought him into sharp conflict with Mr. Balfour.

The resistance to the Bill continued in the autumn Session, and in October Harcourt wrote what he called "a tract" on the subject which he distributed among his colleagues. In sending it to Gladstone (October 13), he said, "I am sure we shall not get any Liberal support for the advance of large sums of English money even if the results of the expenditure were as beneficial as I believe they will be the reverse." Gladstone agreed that "the landlords have no claim upon us now, but that of general equity," but he did not "undervalue the Party advantage" of getting the question out of the way. Harcourt kept up the struggle against what he regarded as the endowment of Irish landlordism into the next Session, when the Land Purchase scheme finally became law.

V

It is only possible to glance briefly at the subject which engaged Harcourt's mind more than others during these years of opposition. One of his critics compared him with the elephant whose trunk was equally adapted to picking up a pin or uprooting a tree, and the jest was true enough, not only as a description of the emphasis of his methods but as an indication of the wide scope of his interests. He ranged with equal freedom over the whole field of affairs, and if his amazing industry sometimes picked up pins with excessive elaboration it was never to the exclusion of the great themes of government. Among these themes, none occupied him more than finance. In his view that sound

finance lay at the root of good government he came, perhaps, more closely into the central current of the Liberal tradition than in any other respect, and during this Parliament he devoted himself untiringly to the technical criticism of Goschen's financial policy. He would have been among the last, I think, to deny the solid character of some of Goschen's achievements, and where he differed from him the judgment of time has not always gone in his favour; but the controversies which he carried on with him in Parliament and in the Press remain as a permanent contribution to the principles of public finance. The change in the form of national accounts introduced in 1887—the separation of the sums borrowed for the purpose of local loans from the national indebtedness—which Harcourt severely criticized, and against which both Gladstone and Churchill protested, was defended by Goschen on the ground that it made for lucidity. His view that local loans represented permanent assets and should not be entered with National Debt has been endorsed as sound policy. There was no substantial disagreement between Harcourt and Goschen on the value of the conversion scheme of 1888, and Harcourt confined his criticisms to such details as the commission allowed to the banks for managing the conversion.

In his attacks on the estate duty of 1889 he foreshadowed many developments of the future, and protested against the discrimination between personal and real estate. Speaking at the Free Trade Hall at Manchester (March 22, 1889), he said:

. . . Mr. Goschen proposes that all property under £10,000 is to be exempt from the tax. I do not object to that. That involves the principle of graduated taxation, and the Conservative Party will hear more of that before they have done. Let us see how it is applied to real property and personal property. If a man leaves £10,000 to be divided among six children the duty will be paid on the £10,000 before it is divided, and therefore each of the six children will pay their share of that duty. If a man leaves £50,000 in realty and it is divided among six children, it will not be paid upon the £50,000, but as each of them will get £8,400 it will be paid upon none of it at all, and therefore the £10,000 personalty will pay £100 of

duty and the £50,000 of realty will pay nothing at all.' Is it possible to conceive a grosser injustice than is committed in taxation of that kind? Oh, Mr. Goschen has had to go to school to the country gentlemen with whom he has taken service, and he has violated every principle of sound finance in this "estate duty," in this most unfair incidence of taxation. . . .

Since his battles with and for the railway companies in the 'sixties he had been sensible of the injustice of the immunity of land value from the burden of taxation, and, referring to the fact that, under Goschen's proposal, the tax on personal property was paid on the whole value as it was at the moment while on real property the tax was not paid on the market value at all, he said: "There are fields outside Manchester which may be let for £3 or £4 an acre, but which are worth thousands of pounds for building. But the tax is payable on twenty-four years' purchase on the miserable nominal rental paid at present."

There was a sharp conflict between Harcourt and Goschen in 1889 on another financial issue. The Government proposed to join the Sugar Convention for suppressing sugar bounties, which had been signed by the majority of the Powers interested, the exceptions being the United States, France, Brazil, Denmark and Sweden. The signatory Powers bound themselves to cease giving bounties to sugar manufacturers and to exclude all bounty-fed sugar from their ports. Harcourt brought all his weapons of attack into play against a proposal which violated his views as a Free Trader, which placed a heavy burden on the consumer, restricted trade, limited our sources of supply, and invited retaliation from countries with which we refused to deal. He appealed in a speech at Bromley (May 8, 1889) for assistance to "get rid of the most mischievous proposals ever made." Largely owing to his resistance the Treaty was never ratified.

But the most formidable and successful of the attacks launched by Harcourt against Goschen's finance was that on the Budget of 1891, especially in respect of the book-keeping which allowed the holding over of surpluses that

would normally be paid into the Treasury, for certain purposes of defence in connection with works extending over a period of years. Harcourt's ground of attack was twofold. The proposal meant the objectionable introduction of what was known in foreign countries as "the extraordinary budget"; and it deprived Parliament of the control over naval expenditure. The carrying over of certain balances into the next financial year—done in the present case in the interests of the Naval Defence Act—was a proceeding which Goschen had opposed in the past and defended now on the ground of continuity of naval policy, for which he was willing to "weaken the control of Parliament." "What, to weaken the control of Parliament over the defences of the country?" cried Harcourt. "Yes," replied Goschen, "because we shall have a stronger Navy, and I am sure the country will forgive any little complication that may be caused." On this excellent opening, Harcourt retorted that it was the very speech Charles I might have made in favour of ship money had he been "a Liberal-Unionist Chancellor of the Exchequer." The controversy, which became involved with the discussion of naval defence, continued throughout 1891, culminating in a correspondence in the autumn between the two controversialists, which was afterwards published as a Blue Book, but which was of too technical a character to call for detailed attention here. In all this laborious investigation of taxation and sinking funds, Harcourt was conscious that there was little popularity to be won. "The truth," he said in a letter to Sir Thomas Farrer (October 26, 1890), "is (as Gladstone often bitterly complains) that it is impossible to get the country to pay any attention either to reduction of expenditure or to payment of debt. The wealth of the nation is increasing at such an enormous rate, as shown by the growth in the produce both of death duties and income tax, that no one cares a d—. There is no tax that really presses severely on anyone, and therefore the nation is disposed to 'live like a gentleman.'" But the indifference of the public did not

damp his eagerness in regard to a theme whose intricacy engaged his passion for intellectual controversy. Occasionally his haste to plunge into battle alarmed his more cautious chief. Thus we find Gladstone writing to him in reference to the Budget of 1887 :

134, PICCADILLY, *April 21*.— . . . Goschen promised a humdrum budget. I believed him and stayed away. I hear that he has just introduced the worst budget I ever heard of—and that you are going to speak on it *to-night*. Is this politic? I have never, I think, known the opinions of the responsible Opposition about the budget given *on the night* of its delivery, certainly not when any serious opinion was called for. It may be antiquated imbecile prejudice on my part, but I hope you will give indulgent consideration to what I have said. . . .

A speech of yours to-night will come before the world surrounded by a lot of sciolism and rubbish now always vented on the budget night.

But if the subject was dry and left the public cold, Harcourt knew how to illustrate his arguments with a picturesque humour which drove his points home to the dullest mind. Thus, speaking at Ringwood, April 20, 1892, in the course of a general arraignment of Goschen's finance, he said :

. . . I do not know anybody who has been more ingenious in what I may call financial acrostics than the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. . . . The year before last Mr. Goschen declared his surplus to be £1,700,000, but in order to make it up he borrowed exactly the same amount. (Laughter.) That is surplus number one. In the year that has just expired he has declared a surplus of one million, but in order to make that up he has borrowed £1,800,000. That is surplus number two. (Laughter.) Plain folks like you and me would call that a deficit of £800,000 ; but then, you know, we are not heaven-born financiers. (Laughter.) In the current year Mr. Goschen estimates a surplus of £200,000. But how is it procured? He tells us he is going to borrow two millions to pay his way for the year. commonplace Englishman might be disposed to call that a deficit of £1,800,000, but philosophers and first-rate financiers have a terminology and a notation of their own which are not understood of the vulgar. You will see, therefore, that these surpluses are in point of fact—What shall I call them? I do not like to use hard words—are financial delusions. (Laughter and cheers.) Addressing a company which consists mainly of householders, I think I can make you understand this system of finance. You desire, perhaps, on the 1st of January

to have a modest balance at your bankers—a very proper thing. But your Christmas bills are, unfortunately, greatly in excess of your receipts. We will say that you owe your tradesmen £1,800. Well, you must have a balance, and there is nothing easier than to borrow £2,000 from your bankers, and so you will have a balance of £200. (Laughter and cheers.) As the conjurer says, "That's the way it's done." (Laughter.)

No detail of finance was too remote or too small to escape Harcourt's appetite for figures, and side by side with his major conflicts with Goschen he carried on minor skirmishes with the Treasury officials, now attacking E. W. Hamilton on the subject of Treasury book-keeping which was "past praying for or scolding at," and now (March 30, 1890) carrying on an argument with Algernon West on the proposition "that the Inhabited House Duty is a bad duty, and that it would be better to repeal it than to take 1*d.* off the Income tax":

. . . It would be much greater relief to the class you want to relieve viz. the householder of moderate means with a life income and a family. Thus—if a man has £600 a year and lives in a £100 house 1*d.* on income tax would represent 600 pence; his house duty would be 900 pence or 50 per cent. more.

House duty is also very unequal in its relation to income. The man of small means spends say one-sixth of his income on his house. But the swell with £10,000 or £15,000 a year lives in a country house rated at £300 or £400. In his case the reduction of 1*d.* income tax would represent 10,000*d.* or 15,000*d.* and that on his house duty 3,000*d.* or 4,000*d.*

In the case of the poor professional man who has to keep up appearances his house rent is probably one-quarter of his income. . . .

## VI

There was a revival in July 1891 of the familiar theme of Tory journalists that Harcourt and Mr. Morley were quarrelling over the succession. While the public was being entertained with these fictions, the subjects of them were engaged in that almost daily correspondence which continued unbroken with short intervals to the end of Harcourt's life. The spirit of it may be gathered by one or two quotations. Thus Mr. Morley, writing to Harcourt from Lowestoft (July 2), says:



Your letter of Tuesday has come on here, and right glad I was to have it.

As it happened, I had just been laughing at a communication to the Tory papers here, that our relations were violently strained, that my illness was merely diplomatic, that I had come here to announce to Mr. G. my withdrawal from the Party, etc., etc., etc., unless you, etc., etc., etc. . . .

"*Our quarrel* is thoroughly believed in, and nothing will remove the impression except a protracted residence on your part here," replies Harcourt from Malwood next day. "I am prepared to kill anyone who dares to affirm or even to think, that any place ever was, or could, or will be, so delicious as Malwood is at this instant. The *luxure* of leaf and flowers is indescribable and unimaginable."

Mr. Morley was at the time staying with Gladstone, who was in deep anxiety about his eldest son, who died under an operation a few days later. Writing to Gladstone on the subject (July 5), Harcourt said :

. . . I know you have all the consolations which your tried faith can afford, and that you will feel that under the painful circumstances a prolongation of life would only have been an increase of misery to you all. But when all is said the death of the first-born is a bitter trial. I suffered it many years ago with a darling child, and the grief has never passed away from my heart. . . .

Just before this bereavement Gladstone had been in communication with Harcourt on the alarm that Salisbury was committing the country to Italian engagements in the Mediterranean as a counterpoise to France. Writing to Harcourt (July 2) from Lowestoft, he said :

. . . Both Morley and I are vexed at the stupid wrong-headedness and *étourderie* of the *Daily News* about the Triple Alliance and the Mediterranean. Balance of power in the Mediterranean ! It is Italy herself who has disturbed it by inflating her navy. The self-complacency to-day founded on the satisfaction of the Germans at their own folly is really asinine. What they have really got is an opinion of a Cabinet, that is to say of Salisbury, and that opinion, the day after he quits office, is not worth the paper it is written on. I believe the country is altogether disposed to avoid entangling engagements. . . .

"As to the Triple Alliance," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley (July 3), "you are right to suppose that I am an

out-and-out anti-balance-of-power man. But I doubt if we shall do much good by going further than emphasizing Salisbury's assurance that he has engaged us to nothing." The alarm passed, but it was not the only incident that made relations with France at this time a little perilous. The dispute between France and Newfoundland in regard to the Newfoundland fishing grounds had been submitted to arbitration between the French and British Governments; but the colonists refused to consent to arbitration except on condition of the withdrawal of the French from their coasts. Caught between the two fires, the Government had to choose between offending France and offending a British colony. A Bill was brought in (March 19, 1891) which practically involved the right to coerce Newfoundland. Harcourt described the Bill as "offensive in character and in the circumstances unnecessary"; but he did not oppose it, lest, in the words of Gladstone, such action should be "misrepresented as a refusal to legislate in support of the fulfilment of treaty obligations." The situation was delicate, and raised the whole question of the limits of colonial autonomy. Mr. Morley was emphatic that the Government must be supported.

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

*March 22, 1891.*— . . . We Liberals are the Party of arbitration. How can we support the colonials in their stubborn refusal of arbitration? We made an agreement in '85; Granville made it, Salisbury took it up, France accepted it; yet in face of this united agreement, the colonials refused that too. In short what they say is: We will have our own way, and nothing but our own way, even though it brings you into war with France. Surely this is an intolerable position, and our Liberal talk about the virtues of arbitration is moonshine, if we accept any such position.

Nobody is stronger for respect for colonial autonomy than I am, but it is new to me that autonomy means liberty to refuse legislation necessary for the fulfilment of treaties made by the Imperial Government.

It comes to this, that every colony with responsible government may make what demand it pleases in respect of a foreign power, and then may force us into a war to back their demand up.

You and I generally agree about these things, and I hope that no temptation to bully the Government will draw our Party into a

thoroughly dangerous position. I know that there is danger on the other side too—the colonial side—but that must be faced. It is less grave than the mischief of discrediting arbitration, and the risk of a trouble with France.

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, *March 26*.— . . . I have no desire whatever to make political capital out of this business. It is far too serious for that, and I had already preached to our people the necessity of observing our pledges in regard to arbitration.

I don't wonder the Newfoundlanders don't think much of arbitration, for as far as I can see they have not a leg to stand upon. . . . The situation of the Newfoundlanders is no doubt intolerable, and if the French were disposed for a "swap" we have plenty of useless islands and settlements to offer them *à la Heligoland*, but from what I see in the papers to-day they turn up their noses at Gambia. I suspect they don't mean settling as long as we are in Egypt. It would be a queer retribution if the occupation of Egypt was compensated by the loss of Canada; but if Newfoundland goes at the mouth of the St. Lawrence—under coercion—it is not difficult to foresee what are likely to be the consequences in Canada. It is a piece of desperate bad luck for H.M.'s Government, but Governments suffer a great deal more from ill-luck than from ill-conduct. . . .

Fortunately the situation was relieved by a more accommodating attitude on the part of Newfoundland, and the Government Bill was dropped after a second reading which Harcourt opposed as unnecessary and unintelligible in view of Newfoundland's changed action. "The pretence that such a futile proceeding was necessary to satisfy France was ridiculous," he wrote to Gladstone, who replied:

HAWARDEN, *June 3*.—I thank you very much for your letter, and from my nest I have watched with much satisfaction the progress of affairs so far as we are concerned in it.

1. No doubt you were quite right in helping the Government out of the mire as to their Newfoundland Bill. As I understand the matter:

(a) The Bill broke the pledge of Secretary Labouchere about disposing of the rights of the Colony without its consent.

(b) It broke the pledge conveyed to the House of Lords in the first announcement of the Bill, when Kimberley supported it because it was to be a temporary measure.

(c) They made the poor House of Lords pass a Coercion Bill not because it was wanted, but that they might see whether or not it *would* be.

(d) They tried to get the H. of C. to read second time on the same grounds and they failed. . . .

These incidents had a bearing upon a much larger problem which was beginning to take shape. The first hints of a new European equation were becoming apparent, and the position of this country in relation to it was the subject of growing public concern. On the one hand the Triple Alliance had been renewed, and on the other there were indications of an approximation between France and Russia. Salisbury stood for the doctrine of "splendid isolation," on which he had the support of the Liberal Party; but there was a growing suspicion in France that this country had leanings to the Triple Alliance, and the recent arrangement by which the Government had ceded Heligoland to Germany, followed by the suggestion that we contemplated entering into naval engagements with Italy, and by the visit of the German Emperor to England, had added to the disquiet. Some extracts from the correspondence between Gladstone and Harcourt will indicate what was passing in the minds of public men on the new grouping of the European Powers, and this country's attitude towards it.

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

45, BROOK STREET, W., July 11, 1891.— . . . All the world for this week has been entirely engrossed with emperors and ceremonies which have been very dignified and fine.

I was invited—for the first time since 1886!—to Windsor. The Queen was amiable and inquired sympathetically after you, as did also the Emperor and the Prince and Princess of Wales. The Guildhall speech was very pacific, but the words of military monarchs seldom correspond to their deeds, and I never forget poor Granville's declaration in the House of Lords in June, 1870, that the peace of Europe had never been more secure. . . .

At the garden party at Marlborough House I saw M. Constant, the French Secretary—Waddington is absent owing to the death of his mother in France. He entered into conversation on the subject of the Triple Alliance and the feeling in France as to the suspected complicity of England in the transaction. I assured him that I felt convinced that Salisbury had not in fact entered into any binding engagements; that he was a timid man in action, and knew the toleration and support he had received from us was entirely due to

his adoption of a policy of peace and neutrality ; that in any event we did not and should not recognize any right of the present Government to engage the responsibility of England in the future ; that our policy was one of absolute disengagement from continental combinations of every kind, and that we maintained the right of England to act as her interests demanded when the occasion arose unfettered by any alliances or understandings of any description. I told him I felt justified in assuring him that these were your views, and that he might so inform Waddington. This seemed to give him much satisfaction. He came to see me again this morning, and I have spoken to him again in the same sense. . . .

I am quite averse to your being brought up to London again, but it has occurred to me as possible that I might address a letter to you on this subject to which you could write a reply for publication, which would do much to soothe the irritation in France. Another course is that under your instructions I should call attention to the matter in the Appropriation Bill, and deliver your sentiments on the subject with due notice to the Government.

My idea is that we should confine ourselves strictly to emphasizing the declaration of the Government that no binding engagements existed and that the freedom of action by this country in the future has not been in any respect impaired or compromised.

I feel strongly that whatever may be our opinion as to the policy of the Alliance itself we should abstain from any criticism of the action of the Powers who have entered upon it.

An occasion offered last night of recording our liberation from the obligations of the Cyprus Convention. . . . It is a good thing to know that we are delivered from this monstrous incubus bred of Dizzy's Eastern phantasies and his eager desire to add the false jewel of Cyprus to the British Crown. . . .

I shall be glad if you will let me know what you think as to a more formal and explicit expression on the Triple Alliance made by you or by your authority, and in what form you think it should be made. . . .

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN CASTLE, July 12, 1891.— . . . 1. I have thought it well to write to Rosebery about the Triple Alliance that he might be prepared for some utterances. But I have said nothing which restrains you from speaking when you please. As regards the choice between your speaking and an exchange of short notes with me, I should like to weigh it, and perhaps if you see anyone whose advice will be useful you would consult him. I shall be much inclined to do as you may prefer ; but if I am to write, not too soon. . . .

3. I have a great respect for your memory, but I think Granville's declaration, founded on what Hammond told him, was simply that there was a remarkable absence of all difficult and critical matter from the correspondence of the Foreign Office. . . .

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN CASTLE, July 15, 1891.— . . . 1. I propose to await Rosebery's answer to my letter on the Triple Alliance before coming to any conclusion, as I am sure he will be susceptible on the subject and will regard as serious any statement from me, especially if written and therefore documentary.

Meantime I fear I may have misled you, for when you spoke of our exchange of letters I thought you meant something very brief. I think you are perfectly free to put forth for yourself such a statement of views as that contained in the letter you have now sent me. But this *with* another detailed exposition from me, a *combination* of ex-ministers writing formally on foreign affairs, without any reference to their ex-Foreign Secretary, would be taken as a slight to him which I am certain that you would be the very last person to desire. . . .

4. Granville's first declaration in 1870 was what I referred to; his second on July 11 rather surprises me, and I do not think I was aware of it. Thunder came from a clear sky; and so it may again. A clear sky; for though the world knew France and Prussia would fight, there was nothing to determine the time. . . .

Is the Government of Cyprus in abeyance?

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

MALWOOD, September 8, 1891.— . . . The Triple Alliance and the ridiculous fuss made over it here, which Salisbury endeavoured too late to counteract, has evidently led to a counter irritant on the part of France and Russia, who have now, it seems, got the Porte into their Party. This Dardanelles scare is the first fruits of this disturbance so gratuitously invited, and I suspect has led to some definite *démarche* on the part of France for the evacuation of Egypt. A joint demand by France and Turkey backed up by Russia for our departure would be one equally difficult to yield or to refuse, and I suspect that the German partnership would look on, and laugh, and say, "if you choose formally to join us well and good, we may see what we can do for you; but if not it is not our affair; look out for yourselves." For my part, come how it will, I should be devoutly glad to get out of Egypt. It makes us what we ought not to be, a continental power—for Egypt is *politically* part of Europe, and involves us in all the *tracasseries* of continental politics.

It is much easier for Salisbury to evacuate than for us—and I would give a good deal to see him driven to it. . . .

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN, September 14, 1891.— . . . I think as I believe you do that while little is said about foreign affairs there is a great deal to say. The line adopted about the Triple Alliance has been to offend one party while giving us no hold or claim upon the other. You

observed, no doubt, certain proceedings attributed to the Belgian King. He may hear of them to his cost. It is one of the very formidable chances of the coming crisis that the two colonial powers may compensate one another at the cost of their diminutive northern neighbours. Again as to Egypt; the moment there is a case for imputing to us the intention of remaining permanently, that moment we do what Nicholas proposed to us in 1852 and thereby cost himself the Crimean War. . . .

In the postscript of a letter to Mr. Morley (September 6, 1891), Harcourt emphasized even more strongly the dangers of the situation :

It seems to me that the infernal folly of the Triple Alliance and its puffing here by Stead and *id genus omne* of asses which forced on the *rapprochement* of France and Russia is already beginning to bear its mischievous fruit in that sore to which all peccant humours fly in the East. The business of the Dardanelles and the Porte's adhesion to Russia is the first move in the game, but it seems clear to me that the real attack will be on Egypt and our occupation, which will bring forth some demand, on the part of Turkey *nominally* and France and Russia *really*, for evacuation. And what answer is to be given? What pretext can be found for evading our pledges upon our occupation? Let us pray that this plague may not break out in our time, Oh Lord, but in that of Salisbury.

It is not possible to deal with Harcourt's general activities in opposition, but a reference may be made to one subject which was much discussed in public and in his private correspondence during the later years of the Parliament. The question of the reform of the House of Lords had been raised in March 1888, on a motion of Labouchere, and it passed through various aspects of debate in the following years. Harcourt gave prominence to it in speeches at the National Liberal Club (July 16, 1890) and at Derby (August 13, 1890), declaring "that the antagonism between a reactionary House of Lords and a Liberal House of Commons is the great political question of the future." But his correspondence with Mr. Morley and Gladstone showed that he was much more alive to the objections to the various reforms which were discussed than he was to the advantages that would result from them. "If you are to have a second chamber," he wrote to Mr.

Morley (December 27, 1889), "you had far better have one which is moderately stupid and tolerably timid, which is what you have got now." "I don't believe in 'mending' the House of Lords," he said in another letter to Mr. Morley. . . "There are some things, e.g. the Papacy, which cannot be reformed. They may die, but they will not change."



## CHAPTER VIII

### LIFE IN THE FOREST

Delights of Malwood—Mixed Society—Visit of Mr. Gladstone—  
A trip Abroad—Familiar Correspondence—Appointment of  
Magistrates—Lord Rosebery's *Pitt*—Mr. Morley's *Walpole*—  
Death of E. W. Harcourt.

“**A** DELICIOUS sun—beautiful west wind—the Forest a paradise. How can you all be such fools as to occupy yourselves about politics? I have forgotten they exist.” So wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley from Malwood (March 5, 1888) in the vein of lusty extravagance that habitually pervaded his correspondence. Few men have had so hearty an appetite for life as he enjoyed throughout. He was often angry, but, except under bereavement, he was never unhappy. “I spent a happy birthday yesterday in the bosom of my family,” he writes to Mr. Morley (October 15, 1891). “I have passed the grand climacteric and have nothing to regret or desire, and feel that I have had more than my due share of good fortune in life. The result of my political tour has been to restore me to equanimity. I am disposed to think that we shall not have a majority at the election. I believe otherwise I should feel like a man sentenced to be hanged.” It was an exaggeration, for he loved the smell of battle, and he was happy in office as well as out. But it is true that much as he delighted in battle his deepest pleasure was found in the woodlands and among his own people. “Here we are safe and sound at home and delighted to be here,” he wrote to his wife from Malwood (September 4, 1890), whither he had returned from a visit to an oculist at Wiesbaden. “I screamed with joy as I entered the gates. It is worth

while going abroad to realize how inferior all foreign parts are in comparison to Malwood. . . . How glad I am to have no more couriers, no more pfennigs, no more foreigners of any sort. This place seems so delicious and quiet. I fear you will not find Loulou here when you return. He has been like a good angel to me. . . ."

His boyish delight in his new home in the Forest was the constant theme of his letters from Malwood. There never had been and never could be such a place. The trees, the flowers, the skies filled him with a perpetual ecstasy, and he threw as much passion into the details of his life in the New Forest as he was accustomed to throw into his attacks on Goschen's budgets or his assaults on the Unionists. He was more concerned because the rooks did not build in his beech trees than he was because his Party was out of office, and wrote to Spencer for enlightenment. "I find that rooks in this Park build freely in beech trees," replied Spencer from Althorp (April 19, 1889). "I suppose in one old plantation there must be twenty beech trees with nests upon them." "I am sorry to learn that it is the individual perversity of our rooks and not their general instinct which prevents their building in our beeches," replied Harcourt. "I should imagine from their aristocratic tendency that they are adverse to Home Rulers." If he was proud of his garden, he was always ready to poke fun at his farming. "I am conducting agriculture here on the most scientific principles," he wrote to Spencer. "I have almost attained a dairy herd which will give no milk, hens which will lay no eggs and pigs which will not sell. So I am almost qualified for the gold medal of the Royal. . . . I go out with the harriers here most mornings at 6 a.m."

He liked other people to enjoy the Forest with him, and his doors were always open to friends or enemies. "We have had a few people off and on—Jews, Liberal Unionists, infidels and heretics—and such like," he writes to Mr. Morley. "We have also had some convicts like Wilfrid Blunt—altogether mixed. Lady Gosford who

lives below our hill keeps up an anti-cyclone of Tories and Orange-folk. . . . Bobby is in great form, and I chiefly hold his clothes whilst he plays cricket with the village boys. Indeed I do nothing with the greatest zeal and success." When Mr. Morley, recovering from an illness, consents to join him he writes (January 11, 1888) :

We are quite enchanted at the thought of getting you here. You will have a bedroom and sitting-room opposite to one another and a bathroom between at the end of a passage, and need never emerge except when you are more bored with yourself than with other people.

I have here a collection of the most unreadable books, which I do not believe anyone but yourself would ever open.

Before you leave you shall be taught to milk a cow, make butter, set a hen, and all things which an educated man ought to know.

We shall have no one here till the end of next week, when E. Hamilton comes, so we shall be able really to enjoy your society. Though any day you wish it the Forest can produce the finest assortment of Tories of the best quality. . . .

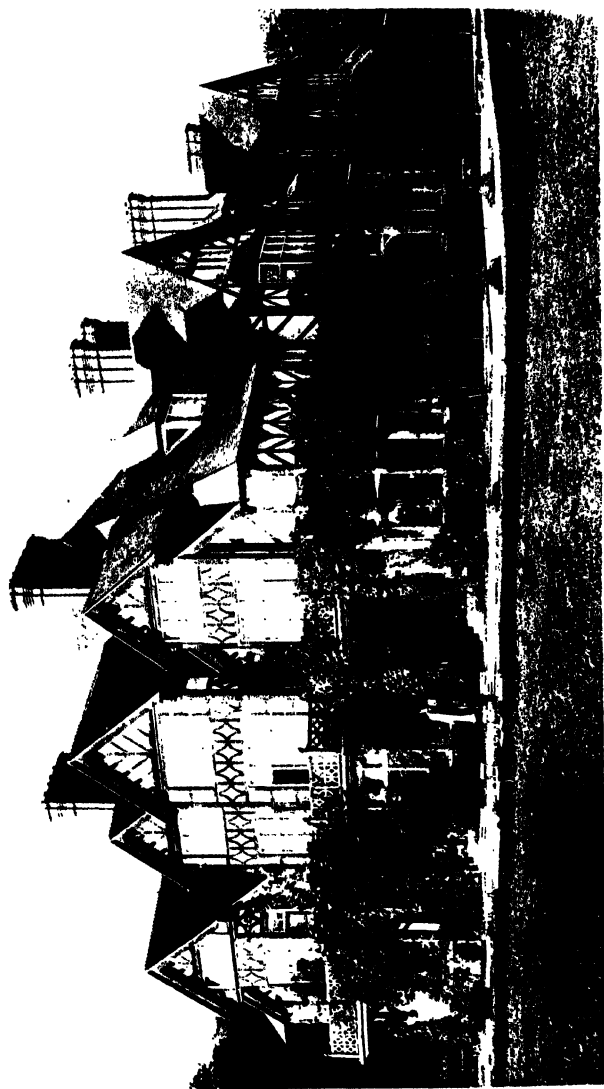
When on another occasion Mr. Morley excused himself for not going to Malwood because "a guest who is a cough and nothing else is no joke," Harcourt replied, "We greatly prefer you *with a cough* to anyone else with clear lungs. . . . So pray come down." Among his visitors was Gladstone, who spent some days with him in the New Forest during his visit to the West Country in June 1889. In this connection, the *Pall Mall Gazette* made a comment to which Mr. Morley jocularly refers in writing from Haslemere to Harcourt :

June 8.— . . . I feel sure that you would regard it as misplaced delicacy on my part if I were not to call your attention to the truly sensible suggestion below. It is one of those things that only need pointing out, and then all mankind instantly see its propriety, and only wonder it was not done before :—

Malwood is indeed a charming retreat. The dominant thought as we quit it is that it is almost too good for Sir William Harcourt ; we all feel that a man like John Morley could make fifty times a better use of it, and that Sir William could do the State many a worse service, than by handing it over by deed of gift to the great littérateur and statesman who honours him by ranking as his colleague.







*Sir William Vernon Harcourt on the Terrace at Haldwood, 1890*



I have had a week of pure solitude here—save for the company of a couple of housemaids and my chef. A capital hermit was spoiled when I joined you men of debate. But I confess that my mind often turned to Malwood, and I wondered how you were getting on. It must have been very pleasant to you to have the old chief under your roof, and he is always delightful in private life. . . . No hurry about the deed of gift. The autumn will suit me perfectly.

"The artifice by which it is sought to conceal the origin of inspired communications is too well known to escape detection," replied Harcourt gaily. "Your close connection with the *P.M.G.* led at once to the discovery of the authorship of the paragraph, though the hint is somewhat nakedly expressed. The predatory instincts of the party of progress have seldom been so frankly revealed. I shall be ready to make the surrender on one condition, that I shall be allowed to reside here as much as I like—a condition which has always been offered to you, but which you have certainly failed to fulfil."

With the advance of years and his absorption in the sylvan pleasures of Malwood, Harcourt's wanderings became limited to the needs of his political campaigns. The autumn holidays in the Highlands were over, and his occasional visits to the Continent were brief and generally concerned with health considerations. "I got back here yesterday," he writes to Spencer from Malwood (October 25, 1889), "delighted to be at home, for we have been dreadful 'gad-about's' lately, the giddy young things having actually dragged me to Paris and up the Eiffel Tower. Since that I have been knocking about in Wales, at Hawarden and at Mentmore." "So frisky and vivacious are we old birds," he writes to Mr. Morley on another occasion, "that we are meditating to slip over for a day or two from Southampton to St. Malo to look at Mont St. Michel, which we have never seen, but shall be back at the end of the week—when the shadows of the stump will be upon me—*Trunco non frondibus efficit umbram.*"

But the only prolonged absence from Malwood during these years were due to disquiet about his eyesight, which necessitated visits in August 1890 and August 1891 to an



oculist at Wiesbaden. From thence he wrote to Lewis Harcourt (August 7, 1891) :

. . . Having left London to escape the Lobby the first thing we lighted on was — at breakfast at Aix-la-Chapelle. There he was, poor devil, for three weeks, and no wonder he fixed on us as a God-send and proffered his services as a guide, but he did not know where the Cathedral was, and had evidently never heard of the existence of Charlemagne. However, we showed him about. The Cathedral, where Charlemagne was dug up 300 years after his death sitting up in his marble chair, with the Bible on his knee and his sacred Joyeuse by his side, and his crown on his head (I should like to have seen him), is very interesting with its great octagonal walls and ancient marble pillars from Ravenna. . . .

The visits to Wiesbaden gave him the opportunity of renewing acquaintance with the Rhineland, and checked the progress of his eye trouble. On his return in September 1891, he wrote to Spencer : " I picture you to myself out cubbing at 5 a.m. with two bottles of Elizabeth at your saddle bow like John Gilpin and a bath of Althorp mud on your return. My *Kur* has been a complete success. I shall set up next season as a Homburg physician, and prescribe miscellaneous waters and a diet of unripe fruit and salads." On these excursions he was generally accompanied by his eldest son, upon whom, as the years went on, he continued to lean with increasing confidence, and for whom his affection showed no abatement. Praise of Loulou from any quarter filled him with childlike delight. " Apropos," wrote Mr. Morley to him (April 5, 1891), " I said to Rosebery last night, ' Do you know the one thing that I really envy Harcourt, more than his brains and more than Malwood ? ' He gave my riddle up. As Loulou may read this I reserve the answer." " I appreciate and am grateful for what you say of Loulou," replied Harcourt. " It is impossible to say too much. I cannot be satiated with his praises." On another occasion Mr. Morley (February 7, 1889), referring to his heavy public engagements, to which Lewis Harcourt as the Secretary of the Home Counties Liberal Federation contributed, said, " It is quite true that they are working a willing horse to death, but

strange to say the most cruel load on the poor brute's back is laid by one, L. V. Harcourt, who lives at ease in the New Forest, and who is in other respects one of the most humane young gentlemen in the world. I am very bitter against him." "I agree that L. V. H. is a monster," replied Harcourt, "but if you suffer under him at a distance what do you think must be my fate who live under his tyranny? It never occurs to me not to do as I am told."

• He was in no haste to see his son, whose health continued delicate, in Parliament, and Loulou on his side preferred to stay outside and play the amiable tyrant to his father, over whose tempestuous spirit his own mildly masterful manner exercised a growing and salutary influence. "I always know when Loulou is angry," Harcourt used to say, "because then he becomes inaudible," and it was generally agreed that the son's imperturbable serenity acted as a perfect foil to the father's stormy temper. The inseparable couple, conspicuous as much by the contrast in their girth as by their similarity in height, became a standing theme of the lobby writers and the caricaturists. "I hope you saw Furniss's lobby picture of L. in *Punch*," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. "One's first picture in *Punch* is an event and he has earned it." "My wife," replied Mr. Morley (August 28, 1888) from Grasmere, "feared Loulou might be hurt at finding himself in *Punch*. I assured the good soul that this was fame, and that L. would be delighted, and that I only hoped and really believed that he had now his foot fairly planted on the ladder which would land him on the top of this glorious gibbet. What a good saying is that of George Meredith's that politicians are like the adventurous rustics, who swarm up the greased pole, too often to find the leg of mutton at the top badly tainted!"

## II

From Harcourt's letters in these days a few extracts will serve to show the spirit of his familiar correspondence.

(To Mr. Morley.) I don't agree with you as to home-brewed swipes. If you don't take care I will brew at Malwood and make

you drink the results. I prefer the corrupt Bass and the corrupter Guinness.

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . Poor Lightfoot was top boss in the Tripos in my year. He was a very good fellow as well as a learned man and I liked him much. He ought not to have died so soon—I suppose it was the result of a regular life. All my Cambridge contemporaries are dead, and I don't know a soul there who is not twenty years my junior. . . .

I am glad you are going to Brighton, not abroad. It is a great mistake making efforts after good climates. They always fail. You see poor Lightfoot died at Bournemouth. If he had stayed at home he might be alive still. We act on this principle. . . .

Why do you go to Liverpool? It is a God-forsaken, hopeless place. You might as well go to speak at a Church Congress at Canterbury.

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . I agree with Mrs. Morley in wishing you could take more care of yourself—for after all, you philosophers are frail creatures and you “o'er inform your tenements of clay.” For my part being a Philistine, when my finger aches I go to bed and I wish you would do the same.

(*To his wife.*) . . . Abercorn asked me across the table if I would drink wine with a Duke. I said, “Oh yes, I never visit on anyone hereditary infirmities.” Natty was there and spoke with pleasure of our coming to Tring. Arthur Balfour is to be there, so we shall have good fun. . . .

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . I confess there are three people whom I relish in public life, Salisbury, Balfour and Hartington. They are all so excessively unlike what the vulgar would expect them to be. . . .

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . I am truly sorry for Asquith's calamity (the death of his wife). He is far and away the best of our youth.

(*To Lewis Harcourt.*) . . . I sat up till 3 a.m. this morning (!!) reading Stanley on Westminster Abbey and collateral history of the thirteenth Century, which is a good deal more interesting than the nineteenth. People's heads were always cut off at the psychological moment, which solved many difficulties. . . .

(*To his wife.*) . . . I spent two hours this morning with Rosebery at Durdans, and had luncheon there. I was not on the whole dissatisfied with his state of mind, but he does not have the children with him, and talks stuff of the necessity of their attending to their studies, which I laughed at.

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . You are a good deal more of a *soul* than I am, who delight in being of the earth earthy. Please explain to me why there are not *great women* in the nineteenth century as there were in the eighteenth and seventeenth, especially in France amongst the "High Life." I don't mean the professional *littérateurs*. It is your business to explain this. You have read of the one and seen the other. You can't make a *Reine* of our "Margot."

(*To Mr. Morley, two days later.*) . . . I can't pass your "named varieties" (as the florists say) of the sex through the 4th standard. I never knew but one really clever (in the male sense of the term) woman and she was very disagreeable. These females who play at being intellectual and expect you to take them *au sérieux* bore me to extinction. They always remind me of an amateur playing on a violin—a very distressing performance. I sat by a woman at Homburg, who before the fish deluged me with metaphysics which she said she had already *débité* to Mr. John Morley. "I shifted my trumpet and only took snuff," and she was a pretty woman too, more's the pity. . . . I doubt not you have a photo of her on your table. . . .

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . If you will quote Horace here are the sentiments of the groves of Malwood:—

Sperat infestis metuit secundis  
Alteram sortem bene præparatum  
Pectus . . . . .  
Rebus angustis animosus atque  
Fortis appare; sapienter idem  
Contrahe vento nimium secundo  
Turgida vela.

My top sails are double reefed, and I never felt less disposed to "start before the gale."

(Your Hiberniæ won't scan; it is a *false quantity* both in verse and in politics, and, as Sydney Smith said, the equivalent of a *faux pas* in a woman.) As to Newcastle—damn Newcastle. . . .

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . The sloth of the country is upon me and I feel like a vegetable in winter. Whether *lethargicus fit pugil* will come about I know not, but I don't feel like it. If the gentlemen who speculate on the supposed aspirants to the lead of the Liberal Party knew the real sentiments of those individuals and how little they desired the thankless office (compared to which the task of an Irish pig driver is a pleasant one) they would be a little astonished. For my part I wish them all very heartily in the place in which probably they will one day find themselves.

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . Do come here if you can. Besides, as you

know I am always much more reasonable in the country than in London. . . .

(*To Mr. Morley.*) . . . Talking of the removal of pieces from the board, what do you say to the removal of the great German Panjandrum himself?

It is not a pleasant prospect to have Europe left at the mercy of a hothead who seems also to be a fool. If I had doubted this before, the glorification of him by Stead would have certified me of it.

(*To Lord Randolph Churchill.*) . . . I find I was right in my recollection that Hudibras is the authority of the derivation of "old Nick." The lines are:

"Nick Machiavel had ne'er a trick,  
Though he gave his name to our old Nick!"

Macaulay says, "Out of his surname our countrymen have coined an epitaph for a knave, and out of his Christian name a synonym for the Devil."

Macaulay, however, makes a profound observation worthy of your notice: "Wise men, however, have always been inclined to look with great suspicion on the angels and demons of the multitude."

In his character of Squire of Malwood he launched a formidable indictment against the packing of the Hampshire Bench. Writing to Lord Northbrook, the Lord-Lieutenant of the County, who had declined the nomination of certain Liberals and Nonconformists to the Bench on the ground that it had "not been customary to nominate magistrates without the recommendation of the Bench, upon which they would act," he said:

*Harcourt to Lord Northbrook.*

MALWOOD, December 22, 1890.— . . . You say that "it has not been customary to nominate magistrates *without the recommendation of the Bench upon which they would act*," which is very much as if the Lord Chancellor should say he could nominate no judge except on the recommendation of the bench of judges, or the Prime Minister no bishop without the recommendation of the bishops. Your view appears to be that the magistrates are a self-recommending co-optative body like the old corrupt corporations, and that therefore the Lord-Lieutenant, as the representative of the Crown, has no real responsibility to the country in the matter. . . . You might just as well in this county leave it to the political committee of the

Carlton Club or to a habitation of the Primrose League. . . . In my opinion it is a very serious misfortune that the labouring classes should be made to feel that the administration of justice is a privilege confined practically to one class, socially, religiously and politically, and it is in human nature that a bias so absolutely one-sided should make itself felt, and I attach more importance to the social than the political exclusions. . . .

Northbrook promptly retreated from the ground he had taken up and accepted the responsibility for the nomination, whereupon Harcourt pointed to the fact that out of 250 magistrates on the Hampshire Bench he believed there were not half a dozen Liberals. "They consist one-half of Tory squires, the other half of half-pay captains—indeed if you look through the list it reads like a general court martial, and I have no doubt the law administered is very much of a martial description." He described the men whose nomination had been refused, and proceeded :

. . . Every one of these men are fit and proper men to be upon the Bench? They are excluded partly from their politics, principally perhaps, for their religious opinions, most of all certainly on account of their social status. They are not supposed to be fit to associate with the squires or the sporting captains. All this is very bad and has the worst possible effect upon public opinion. . . . I may be wrong, but I think if I was to offer you a sovereign for every Non-conformist you could find on the Hants Bench, it would not ruin me even at this time of Christmas bills. . . .

In his tastes he belonged to the eighteenth century, and he was scornful of all modern tendencies. The rage for athletics filled him with a boiling indignation, and when the masters of the public schools discussed the question of discarding Greek he delivered his soul on the subject in a letter (December 27, 1890) to a correspondent in the course of which he said :

*Harcourt to a Correspondent.*

. . . The absolute and complete subordination of work to games is the distinguishing feature of the modern *curriculum*, both at the Universities and the Public Schools, and the accomplices, perhaps the ringleaders, in the movement have been the Masters themselves. Indeed I have heard of one school where the Masters are avowedly

selected by the honours they have taken in gymnastics in order to give a prestige to the school.

Forty or fifty years ago as I well remember cricket was not unknown, football was occasionally played, boat-races were enjoyed, but they were the relaxation not the occupation of youth in *statu pupillari*. The Senior Classic, the Newcastle Scholar, could hold up his head even in the presence of a demon bowler. And the Senior Wrangler might take rank with "the Stroke."

But all this is changed. Youth is naturally stimulated by the love of praise, and boys will pursue that which brings them honour. Everything conspires to the same end. We live under the rule of a sensational Press; there is much racier "copy" to be got out of a match than out of a tripos. There is more fame to be acquired by a goal than by an Honour.

Far be it from me to disparage the dominant idol of the hour—though like Juggernaut it tramples down the "humanities" in its worship. I dare not place myself so much out of harmony with the *fin du siècle*. I will not question the supreme claim of athletics over letters and science in the training of the young. Nevertheless there used to be some moderation in these things once—no one is moderate in anything now. Everything has to be "boomed"—it is so remunerative to the "boomers"—so exciting to the "boomed," and we are in the height of a "muscular boom." . . .

In a society where wealth and luxury are greatly on the increase it is inevitable that our public schools and universities should tend to become more and more the lounge of the rich and the idle, and less and less the training ground of honourable industry and laborious merit. It is this and not compulsory Greek that deters parents from sending to the University boys who have to fight their way in the world. If the Universities are ever to recover the place they once held in the intellectual life of the nation it will not be by lowering the standard of learning but by upholding the honour of work.

Harcourt's letters to Mr. Morley, which were the most continuous feature of his correspondence, ranged over literature and history as well as politics and gossip. He was insistent in his praises of Walpole, who was his ideal statesman, and critical of the younger Pitt. Referring to the fact that Mr. Morley was engaged on the life of Walpole, he wrote (September 16, 1888):

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

. . . I am glad to know you are doing Walpole—though I fear you are not worthy of him. I doubt if your philosophical and casuist spirit can really sympathize with his fine and brutal antagonism to *damned nonsense*, which is sometimes called the "spirit of the

age." So it is, and a very "degenerate age" too. I am a thorough eighteenth-century man in disposition, education, sentiment and connection. I abhor Daily Telegraphism, Pall Mallism and sensationalism of all kinds—likewise even more *Kultur and Geist*, Matthew Arnoldism, and all the troop of emasculate enlightenment—"Men with long hair and women with short."

Have you ever tried upon Mr. G. an encomium on Walpole? I once told him I thought W. the greatest Minister who ever ruled in England. He did not like it.

It is all nonsense about his corruption. He paid the fools to do what the wise men told them—a very good bargain. After all it was the Philistines who made England just as the *idéologues* ruined France.

They are, however, perishing so fast under the jawbones of asses that I fear there is little left for us in the future.

Do come here. It is quite divine—the flowers, the woods, the prospect, the air. As I look over Southampton Water over the sea of woods you might fancy yourself at Como or Maggiore. . . .

The best idea of what Walpole was is, I think, to be found in the letters of the man who was *not his son*.

Writing to Mr. Morley, apropos of the announcement that Lord Rosebery was writing the life of Pitt, he said :

*Harcourt to Morley.*

MALWOOD, September 10, 1891.— . . . It is a courageous attempt to challenge the last, best piece of Macaulay—his Pitt in the Encyclopædia; and even if he was to fail (which he will not) he could say *magnis tamen excidit ausis*. He will not satisfy me unless he is very severe on the last five years of Pitt's life. From his resignation in 1801 there seems to me to have been nothing great about him. Whether he really resigned on Catholic Emancipation is a question as dark as that of the Man in the Iron Mask. If he did, his return in 1803 and his offer to return in 1801 was mean to the last degree. His attitude towards Addington from 1801-1803, whom he regarded as his "powder monkey" (you will recognize the phrase), was contemptible. He lost the respect of his only respectable colleagues the Grenvilles. He truckled to the King in his eagerness for office, due I fancy mainly to the intolerable pressure of his debts. Another sad and striking feature of his closing years was his solitariness. He died without a personal friend. When he left Bath he was known to be moribund. But no one seems to have gone near him at Wimbledon except Lord Wellesley, who was a comparative stranger. Even Canning, though a strong political adherent, does not seem of late years to have been on intimate terms with him. He was unloved and I suppose like Napoleon unlovable. To him applied in a terrible degree the saying of Pascal "*Je mourrai seul*."



I shall be curious to see how R. treats the behaviour of Pitt at the Union on the Catholic question. I have examined this matter pretty carefully and have come to the conclusion—

(1) That Pitt authorized Castlereagh to give the Catholics to understand their claims would be conceded.

(2) That he promised Lord Clare they should not.

(3) That he deliberately suppressed his authority given to Castlereagh both from the King and Clare.

(4) That having failed in his point and having declared that as "a man of honour he was bound to resign" the "man of honour" threw over his engagements to get back, and offered the King *within three months* of his resignation to abandon the Catholics if he would only take him back, and underwent the humiliation of having this dishonourable offer declined. . . .

When Mr. Morley had completed the chapter of his book concerned with the constitutional history of the British Cabinet and its development under Walpole, he sent it to Malwood with a request for final observations. Harcourt, who had already sent the fruits of earlier researches on the subject, replied in a long memorandum which is reprinted in Appendix II to this volume partly on account of its intrinsic value and partly on account of the light it throws on Harcourt's passion for the study of constitutional history, and especially of eighteenth-century history. He was an avid student of the growth of British institutions, and always desired to trace any modern practice to its constitutional beginnings.

### III

Just before Christmas, 1891, Harcourt was summoned to Nuneham by the news of the serious illness of his brother. The passing of his oldest companion is recorded in letters to his wife.

#### *Harcourt to his Wife.*

NUNEHAM, *Midnight, December 18.*— . . . I never saw so composed and brave a scene. I was not allowed to see him till the Oxford surgeon came at 8 p.m., when he told me that death was at hand. I then went to his bedside. He was perfectly conscious, and said "how glad he was they had sent for me," and that "we had always been good friends." He begged me to take care of Susan [his wife] and called her "poor little thing." I think his

mind ran more on her than on anything else. He then told me of his estate arrangements and his provision for Miss Payne. He asked the doctor "whether he thought it would last through the night." He said to me, "Our span is short." I said he had led a good and useful life, but he said he wished it had been better. He told me it was unfortunate that Aubrey was not here, and that "he had a misgiving that he should never see him again," and that "it would be a sad end to his tour." All this in a tone of the greatest composure and fortitude which I could hardly have believed possible if I had not seen it.

\* I write this at twelve o'clock at night in order that you may have it by early post on Sunday. He is still alive, but cannot live through the night.

*December 19, 5 a.m.*—It is all over; our dear brother passed away in perfect peace. To me it is a great sorrow—the end of a friendship of sixty years, and I have so little left of a once numerous kindred.

At 10 p.m. last night I sent for the clergyman, and the parting scene with Susan took place in his presence. She was much affected, but bore up well. Her lot is very desolate. She is left the house for her life, as my brother said to me, "so that she may not be turned out." . . .

*December 19, Evening.*—I sent you fragmentary notes of the past sad night. I am still lost in amazement at my dear brother's calmness and composure throughout. He really seemed like a man starting on some ordinary voyage troubled by nothing, disturbed by nothing. He asked after you, spoke and thought of every one—especially Susan. Asked how long he should last, and almost at the last breath inquired whether he had any pulse left. . . . At the very last he sent a message to Susan to say he was "passing away in peace without any suffering." I had no conception it was so easy to die. . . .

Edward Harcourt's only son, Aubrey, was travelling in Australia, and in his absence Harcourt was left with the full responsibility of administration. "I don't know what I should do without Loulou, who as always is everything to me and to everybody," he wrote to Spencer. He was concerned about the future of Nuneham. It was left, unentailed, to Aubrey to do what he liked with. "What that will be no one can tell," wrote Harcourt to his wife. "Those who know him best think he will never live here, and will get rid of the whole place and everything belonging to it—a strange result of all my poor brother's care and

devotion to it." The anticipation was not fulfilled. Aubrey, who had suffered a bereavement in youth which left a permanent effect upon him, remained unmarried, and spent much of his life in travel; but he exercised the freedom his father had given him in the spirit of Edward's wish, and kept Nuneham as a heritage of the Harcourt family.

## CHAPTER IX

### CLEARING THE DECKS

Differences on the retention of Irish Members at Westminster—Churchill and Chamberlain—Lord Rosebery's views on Foreign Policy—Panegyric on Gladstone—A brush with Chamberlain—The Hartington leadership in the 'seventies.

THE Parnell episode threw a shadow over the fortunes of the Opposition at a most critical time. After the exposure of the Pigott forgeries Home Rule seemed to be caught on the tide of assured victory. The discredit attaching to this exposure involved the Government, and accentuated the drift of public opinion towards the policy of appeasement to which Gladstone had given the authority of his unequalled prestige.

Resolute government " was in full operation under the administration of Mr Balfour, and the eviction of tenants, the imprisonment of members, the suppression of public meetings and all the accompaniments of coercion were the daily theme of the Press and of Parliament. But the English appetite for this coarse diet was soon satisfied. The country grew weary of "resolute government." The change of temper was no new experience. Throughout the history of England in Ireland the most constant feature had been the periodic exercise of force, followed by a phase of indifference if not of goodwill. Again and again, in the sixteenth century as much as in the nineteenth, action and reaction had followed each other in rhythmic sequence. The policy of force so often entered on, had always broken down in the end, and Salisbury's experiment of "twenty years of resolute government" was visibly doomed to suffer the fate of his great ancestor's similar experiments

in the sixteenth century. The tide of public opinion, as indicated by the by-elections, began to flow steadily against the Government, and it was apparent that whenever the appeal to the country was made, Gladstone would be returned with a Home Rule majority. But the revelations of the Parnell divorce case, and the subsequent civil war in the Irish ranks, came like a killing frost upon the spring. For the moment it shattered the hopes of the Liberal Party, and seemed to make it doubtful whether the cause for which alone its great leader remained in public life could be a winning issue at the approaching election. The difficulty was aggravated by the fact that there had been, as indicated in a previous chapter, disagreement among the Liberal leaders on vital questions affecting the form of the Home Rule scheme which should be submitted to the new Parliament in the event of victory at the polls.

Of these questions, the most important was that of Irish representation at Westminster, in regard to which every variety of opinion prevailed. The subject was discussed in numerous letters that passed between Gladstone and his two chief lieutenants, and in many conversations. Harcourt, who remained a stout advocate of representation at Westminster, urged on his colleagues a discreet silence as to the details of the prospective measure, and was angry at the demand of Mr. Asquith, who was assuming a prominent place in the counsels of the Party, that the leaders should take the country more into their confidence as to their intentions. He scolded Spencer for discussing representation at Stockton, and writing to Mr. Morley said :

*Harcourt to Morley.*

MALWOOD, October 27, 1889.— . . . Though Spencer is altogether in my sense of keeping the Irish members *sans phrase*, I am sorry that with unnecessary candour he exposed so much surface to the enemy. He is one of those children of light who has all the innocence of the dove, and but little of the craft of the serpent. To give in at this moment to "Asquithism" is only to play into the hands of malignants like Atherley Jones and George Russell. I don't profess to be a profound political philosopher, but I fancy I know something of political strategies. To go debating about these

difficult matters in public merely to gratify the impertinent curiosity of people some of whom cannot and some of whom will not understand them is really to throw away the game. It is like a number of unarmed black men walking up to the rifles merely to be shot down. If we have the sense to keep our own counsel they may hammer at us in vain, but if we allow ourselves to be engaged in the morasses of the "Irish Members at Westminster" we shall be routed horse and foot. . . .

"All right, my dear Harcourt," replied Mr. Morley. "Mum shall be the word. . . . I won't let out whether I'm for colonial H.R. (Home Rule) or federal H.R., or Manx H.R." Harcourt was still more disturbed at this time by a proposal to compromise on the basis of a diminished Irish representation at Westminster. Writing to Gladstone, he said:

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

MALWOOD, October 27, 1889.—. . . I was rather disturbed to hear from Rosebery that in your discussions after I left Hawarden opinion seemed to have inclined to a diminution of the number of the Irish members. I confess that this seems to me of all solutions the one which it is least possible to defend. If Irish members are to remain at Westminster for Imperial purposes such as peace and war, commercial treaties, free trade and protection, Colonies, India, foreign policy, confidence in administration, etc., etc., for what possible reason is their voting power on these matters, which are of the first importance, to be diminished? . . .

The proposal of course is supposed to get rid of the objection to Irish interference with British domestic affairs, but though it may lessen the *amount* it does not really touch the *principle* of the objection. When parties are pretty equally divided fifty Irish votes may be as decisive as 100—say on the English Church Establishment, and when you have once conceded the objection to Irish interference, you don't get rid of it any more than the young woman did of the baby by saying it's such a little one. . . . I confess the more I think of it, the more I am convinced we ought resolutely to adhere to our own reticence on this matter till things are much more developed than they are at present.

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN, October 29, 1889.—On the subject of reticence, I agree with you to the *nth*. My object is that we should remain absolutely free as to our dealings in the matter of retaining Irish members, until the critical time comes; so that we may duly appreciate the public opinion as it may then be, which we cannot now

accurately know. The more suggestion, the more discussion there may be among ourselves, the better ; but let it be purely academical, absolutely without prejudice ; aiming only at " more light " as Goethe said in his closing hours.

I own I think you deviate a little from sound doctrine, when you use words which would shut you off from any one of the possible alternatives ; (not least if it be one towards which several minds are at present inclining). For myself I shall claim and hold to a rollicking liberty of choice. I hope my epithet a little attracts your sympathy.

" I send you a characteristic letter of Mr. G.'s," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley, enclosing the foregoing. " It means ' Hold your tongue, and by-and-by I shall get my own way.' He hugs the hope and belief that ultimately he will carry his own plan of 1886 unaltered as to Irish M.P.'s and all the rest. Don't he wish he may get it ! "

For himself, Harcourt observed very carefully in his speeches during the summer and autumn of 1889 at Hereford, Salisbury, Hanley, the National Liberal, and at the Liberal Federation at Manchester, his own policy of avoiding the discussion of the details of Home Rule, devoting himself to the declaration of the principles of self-government and to the exposure of the failure of coercion. He believed that the art of defence was attack, and was as industrious in denouncing his opponents in public as he was in arguing against his friends in private. He rejoiced at the trouble which Churchill caused Chamberlain at Birmingham in the autumn of 1889, but his gratitude did not prevent him from attacking the " bumptious ignorance " which Churchill had displayed in his allusions to the circumstances under which the Act of Union was accomplished. Churchill, pleading " not guilty," sent him a speech which he had delivered at Bath on the subject, whereupon Harcourt, always eager for a historical argument, replied (November 30, 1889) with a long dissertation on the iniquities of Pitt and the Union, in the course of which he said :

*Harcourt to Lord R. Churchill.*

. . . Your main argument is that Scotland hated the Union and became reconciled to it and that Ireland will do the same. I do not

agree—Scotland from the terms of her Union was on the whole governed by Scotchmen for Scotchmen, from the time of John, Duke of Argyll, to that of Dundas.

Ireland has always been governed, not by Irishmen or for Irishmen, but by Englishmen for the bastard Anglo-Irish, what is called the "loyal minority." . . .

As to Scotland, in spite of the Union she always had a good deal of her own way. She hanged Capt. Porteous in spite of Walpole and Queen Caroline, and by the help of the Duke of Argyll (a different sort of man from the present) got off scot free. If the Irish could hang the Governor of Kilmainham with impunity they would think better of the Union. . . . And now, my dear Lord Randolph, you have brought all this on yourself by your good-humoured note which shows you bear no malice. . . . In the idleness of the Forest I have inflicted on you the lectures I ought to have delivered at Cambridge.

Let us pair off our reciprocal inactions and begin with a clean slate. I am now the aggressor. We shall not agree on the Union, but I wish you all success in Central Birmingham. .

But though in the conflict between Churchill and Chamberlain his sympathies were with Churchill he had no doubt as to which of the two men would win. "R. C.'s speculations on the future of Joe are of little value," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "The two men are made of very different metal. It is like soft metal against hard steel, and cool vindictiveness has far more staying power than passionate spite." He was scornful of Chamberlain's idea that he could make Toryism the instrument of Radical aims. The programme he had imposed on it—Tithes, District Councils, Land Purchase, Free Education—"are all odious to the Tory mind," he wrote to Mr. Morley (January 9, 1890):

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

. . . The P.M.G. like the fool it is talks of Goschen's *coup*. No Government makes a *coup* which dissatisfies *its own party*; it is always repaid by sulky abstention. The idea that it is to gain by popularity with the other side shows a crass ignorance of practical politics. Forster's Education Bill lost the Radicals in 1874, and did not gain the Tories. The same was true in 1885 with our miserable semi-Jingoism in Egypt, Afghanistan and the Cape. You can only have a strong Government by acting on the lines and in sympathy with the sentiments of *your own Party*. Peel had to learn this in 1845 and Disraeli in 1868. What did household suffrage avail him



at the General Election? What good were Lowe's surpluses and Gladstone's bribes in 1874?

These are the elements of politics of which all "able editors" and some statesmen seem to be ignorant.

If Joe really was to succeed in inducing the Government to adopt a Birmingham programme he would secure the destruction of the Tory Government and the Tory Party, and Salisbury knows a trick worth two of that.

If the dissensions in the ranks of the enemy gave him pleasure, the dissensions in his own ranks filled him with rage. A fissure in the Liberal Party, which was destined to split it in twain ten years later, had begun to appear with the emergence under Lord Rosebery of an Imperialist group within the ranks. In Imperialism Harcourt saw the thing he most detested, jingoism, in a thin disguise, and its appearance as a challenger for the control of the Liberal Party seemed to him to threaten the very ark of the Liberal covenant. "Spencer was very angry about Asquith joining the Imperial League," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "and said he was greatly disappointed in him." His own disappointment also was great, for he recognized the new force that had come into the ranks. Writing to Mr. Morley from Frampton Court, Dorchester, in January 1890, he said:

... Our young men like E. Grey, who *can* speak, won't. Asquith who will never do a day's work for us in the House goes about the country doing mischief and gladdening the heart of the Unionists and the *P.M.G.* It is really too bad. He knows quite well the decision which has been taken, and like a bad whist player deliberately endeavours to force his partner's hand. I wish I was going to speak soon. I would give him "a piece of my mind." When we kicked up the devil's own row on the Vote on Account in relation to the Parnell inquiry, you remember how the Israelites grumbled at Moses and Aaron, and you have not forgotten the Webster Debate.<sup>1</sup> These are the gentlemen who call out for "more vigour." The truth is, what they like is to stand by with their hands in their pockets and order the front bench to do all the fighting and then abuse them for their pains.

With the tendencies of Lord Rosebery on foreign policy he was no more pleased. His personal relations with

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the abstention from voting of the Liberal lawyers on March 22, 1889, after Harcourt's arraignment of Webster.

Lord Rosebery were cordial, and he strongly urged him to accept the chairmanship of the new London County Council. "I have written to Mentmore to-day to urge him to accept," he wrote to Mr. Morley (January 27, 1889). "Loulou is there and so I shall hear to-morrow what is the latest phase of that *varium* and *mutabile* temperament." When Lord Rosebery took the office, Harcourt merrily telegraphed his congratulations in the words, "Turn again, Primrose." But later he objected to the line Lord Rosebery took in the House of Lords. Harcourt generally approved of the foreign policy of Salisbury, which he held to be a reversal of that of Beaconsfield, and he said the Liberal Party were unanimous against carping at the Government on the subject. "I cannot admit the right of a single member of the Party to appear to commit us at this critical moment to an opposite opinion," he wrote to Gladstone (June 19, 1890), asking for a meeting of the ex-Cabinet to consider the action of the Government on the African and Heligoland question. "I fear we are fundamentally at issue with Rosebery on these questions, and, if it is so, I think the sooner we make up our minds the better." Gladstone summoned the meeting, but said he thought Harcourt was unnecessarily alarmed. "I hope," he said, "we shall . . . dismiss from our minds all preconceptions and assumptions that we are at variance until we have evidence in that direction, which I think will not be forthcoming. . . ."

Gladstone was always a little suspicious of the impetuosity of Harcourt, but he was still more sensible of his unrivalled parliamentary powers, and relied increasingly on his support both in the House and in matters like the Committee on Procedure, in which he sat and wrote his letters while his combative colleague fought the battle. His growing deafness was disarming him in active warfare. "As to health and strength, and I think voice, I can make a good report of myself," he wrote to Harcourt from Amalfi (February 12, 1889). "But the wall of deafness between me and the outer world, which has been for some time in course of being built up, gets higher and higher, and

certainly the builder has been busy since we left England." Harcourt was critical of his leader as of most people, and occasionally alluded to him in his letters by such jocular names as "our occidental Christian Chinese." But these levities did not affect his general feeling of affection for him and his delight in serving him and singing his praises. When in his reading he came across some new historical fact bearing on a constitutional point, he would promptly write off to Gladstone announcing his discovery, and in one of his letters to him Gladstone said that he was one of the few men left who seemed to remember that we had a constitution. On Gladstone's eightieth birthday, Harcourt, in a speech at Derby, delivered a moving panegyric on his chief in which he used with great appositeness some passages from Tennyson's "Ulysses." Referring to the speech, Gladstone, writing from Hawarden (December 31, 1889), said :

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

. . . I could not, in leisure and with reflection, express in the manner I could wish my thanks for your more than kind, and far more than just, words concerning me.

It is not the first, though it is the most conspicuous time, when you have made me ashamed and humbled (no bad thing I admit) by the exercise of your great faculties for a purpose in which, because it is a kindly one, they seem to find their most congenial, and really I think unrivalled, exercise.

Take my thanks such as they are, hasty, bungling and confused, and only believe the feeling they express will not readily pass away. . . .

But, among his colleagues, it was Mr. Morley with whom Harcourt continued to be in the fullest sympathy and agreement. When Parliament was not sitting the two statesmen maintained constant communication on policy and electoral prospects, on the results of contests and the enemy's manœuvres, on meetings in England and the doings of Mr. Balfour in Ireland. In their different manners they were admirably matched, and kept the ball travelling with mutual enjoyment. "I have got your two letters with all the satisfaction in life," observes Mr. Morley

on one occasion (August 8, 1891). "You always stir me up, and make me feel in a good humour—except the not frequent occasions when you make me feel in a bad one." When in the autumn of 1890 Mr. Morley, who had been in Ireland, became involved, as a witness of the provocative action of the police in Tipperary, in a controversy with Mr. Balfour, Harcourt's warm backing evoked from him the remark (October 5, 1890), "That is what I call being *bon camarade*, and I care as much for that as for anything in public life. J. C. [Chamberlain] had the gift—but it's uncommon, eh?" The correspondence between the two was always enlivened by an atmosphere of fun. Thus Harcourt, writing to Mr. Morley from Malwood (October 28, 1890), observes:

. . . It is premature for you to resign already. I have no doubt we shall all do so the morning after the next Government is formed. . . . The only thing that strikes me is that it is a bit hard on the poor innocents throughout the country who are "beating their flanks" to return a Liberal Government to power to act together for common objects.

Poor folk, how little they know the coachmen for whom they are harnessing the team.

To which Mr. Morley retort (October 30):

. . . As to your parable of the coach. I have no ambition to be a coachman. I am only the owner of a small but high-mettled moke, on which I want to be allowed to trot briskly and pleasantly along by the side of the Liberal four-in-hand, cheering the mighty Jehus on the box. Why do you quarrel with me for that? The worthies whom you think so badly used are not harnessing the team for me—and that's what I want you to let me tell them. Besides, I think that I work as hard in the business as they do, and if I'm to have no voice in the route, they may go to the devil, and so I mean to tell them pretty frankly. *Addio*.

And Harcourt rounds off the parable with the customary invitation to Malwood:

. . . The grazing in the Forest is supposed to be particularly favourable to mokes, and after a hard winter they are not found to be very high-mettled.

Pray don't allow the great Liberal Party to fall into the evil ways of the great philanthropic-religious Emin Relief Expedition with

their unedifying controversies. Let us wallop our own niggers with discretion and in secret, and if we have weaknesses don't let us peach.

I must say I think the G.O.M. taking him altogether has come very well out of his big job. After all there are none of us who could talk so much and do so little harm to ourselves and anyone else. . . .

## II

As the Parliament drew to an end and a new appeal to the country approached, the breach between the Liberals and the Liberal Unionists widened. Gladstone still seemed to think that the break with Hartington at all events was not final. He lamented the drift of the great Whig families from the popular cause, and saw in it the premonition of sinister changes. The death of Granville, one of the last of the stalwarts, affected him deeply, and writing to Harcourt on the subject (April 2, 1891), he said: "The severance of the higher Liberals from Liberalism may in its remoter consequences touch the foundations of the monarchy, and is to me a subject of unceasing sadness, quickened by the event of this week into an acute form." Harcourt did not share Gladstone's view about Hartington. Writing to Mr. Morley, who was at Biarritz with Gladstone, he said:

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, December 30, 1891.—I am glad to have such a bright account of you and your "young pal." . . . I am amused at Mr. Gladstone's illusions about Hartington. Nothing I think is more obvious than that Hartington is destined to be at the head of affairs as soon as we go out, which will be about six weeks after we go in. I myself have a great public respect as well as personal regard for the man. He has the immense advantage—so rare in this "*fin de siècle*" of having no "d——d nonsense" about him. He is almost worthy to have lived in the eighteenth century. He is also free from the petty malignity which infests other friends of ours, and altogether, I dare say, would govern England quite as well as she deserves to be governed. I was much pleased at receiving a kind letter from him inviting me to stay at Chatsworth over the Sunday for the funeral [of the Duke of Devonshire], which shows that public differences do not obscure old friendships. . . .

So far as Chamberlain was concerned, the finality of the rupture was clear. "I feel sure now that he [Chamberlain] will join Balfour in the fullness of time," wrote Mr. Morley

to Harcourt (October 25, 1891). "They have strong and real admiration for one another, and he won't mind taking the second place, if that is the price of being able to pay out his old friends." In public the antagonism between Harcourt and Chamberlain had assumed a sharper character as the controversy proceeded. There had been a somewhat embittered correspondence in the public Press in July of 1891, following upon a speech by Harcourt at Holloway in which he had recalled Chamberlain's declaration for Home Rule (also at Holloway) in June 1885. Chamberlain retorted that the speech from which Harcourt quoted was in favour of his national council scheme, "which at the time was accepted by Mr. Gladstone, Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Parnell as a satisfactory solution of the Irish question, but which has since been thrown over by those gentlemen in favour of a totally different scheme brought in by Mr. Gladstone." Harcourt denied that any scheme of Chamberlain's had been "thrown over" by Gladstone, himself or Parnell, "because I know of none that was ever in a position to undergo that process," and laid stress on the fact that Chamberlain now described his scheme both as one for "a national council" and (in the same letter) as one of "national councils."

. . . The distinction between the two things is as vital as anything can be, as was well pointed out by Lord Salisbury in his celebrated speech at Newport, when he insisted that the objections to several smaller autonomous local bodies were much greater than those which applied to a single central government. It shows, I think, through how many phases Mr. Chamberlain's mind has passed on this question that even now his recollection is so confused as regards the real character of the plan he intended to advocate at Holloway. . . .

Chamberlain retorted by comparing Harcourt to Alice in *Through the Looking Glass*. "'She is in that state of mind that she wants to deny something; only she does not know what to deny,' said the White Queen. 'A nasty vicious temper,' said the Red Queen." Later in the year Harcourt was so outraged by the bitterness of Chamberlain's attacks on the Government of 1880-5, of which Chamberlain was

himself a member, and by his general "vilification of Gladstone," that he prepared a detailed memorandum in view of Mr. Morley's visit to Lancashire. "You are the best fellow in the world," said Mr. Morley in acknowledgment. "That piece about the Shipping Bill is worth silver and gold. How J. C. will love us. 'Tis a pity, but justice must be done, and if he strikes at Mr. G., he strikes at other folk." Mr. Morley executed justice accordingly, and Harcourt wrote to him, "Bravo! you have 'hit him hard; he has no friends.' It could not have been done better. . . . I have a calf here [Malwood] ready to be killed. When are you coming?" And when a few days later Mr. Morley repeated the chastisement, Harcourt said, "I really must choke you off J. C.'s throat. It is a case of cruelty to dumb animals. Come here and inspect the pigs." But these public jousts did not affect the personal good feeling that continued between Harcourt and Chamberlain, and when a few weeks later there were alarming reports in the Press as to the state of Harcourt's eyesight Chamberlain sent anxious inquiries on the subject. He had given up all hopes of reunion, but he loved an opponent who was a hard hitter and had no petty vices, and on personal grounds he treasured his friendship. Harcourt replied:

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

MALWOOD, November 14, 1891.—Very many thanks for your most kind letter of inquiry. I am happy to be able to reply that I was never better in my life or more fit for my favourite occupation of doing nothing. I really see as well as I ever did in my life. The story of failure of eyesight is all a lie, the resource of London correspondents in want of "copy" in November. The truth is that some two years ago I had some trouble with one eye for which I consulted the great oculist at Wiesbaden. Being at Homburg this year I saw him again, when he gave me a most satisfactory account and found me much better than when he first saw me in 1890, so that I have been relieved of all anxiety and never trouble myself about the matter except when these lying devils excite the hopes of my foes and the sympathy of my friends. It is really no use contradicting them; they would only invent for me some worse disease.

They have, however, done me one good turn in eliciting from you expressions of regret which I assure you I highly and cordially reciprocate.

I hope we shall always continue to fight on the same good terms which we have hitherto found practicable. Heaven knows how little I wish to win ! • I am a good deal too fond of a quiet life relieved by an occasional " turn-up."

Loulou is hard at work as usual shooting and organizing and bags, sometimes a bird, sometimes a constituency. He grows every year in grace with God and man, and is the joy of my life. Little Benjamin [Robert Harcourt] I grieve to say is doomed to Eton next Easter, and the sunshine of our house will be eclipsed.

Pray remember us all to your charming wife, and tell her she owes us a visit here for nursing your early loves at Malwood. My regards also to the chip of the old block, light Austen.

And a promise from Chamberlain to visit Malwood in the spring followed. He admitted that the omens pointed to the overthrow of the Government, but thought that the Gladstone coach would soon be upset. The expectation that the General Election, which could not now be long delayed, would result in the return of Gladstone was general, and during the autumn of 1891 there was much private and public activity on the part of the Liberal leaders. Harcourt, as often happened, cultivated in private a rather gloomy attitude about the Party future, in contrast to the jubilant tone he adopted in public, and, replying to one of his letters at this time, Spencer said :

*Spencer to Harcourt.*

NORTH CREAKE, FAKENHAM, *September 30, 1891.*— . . . You seem in the dumps over politics, but I cannot see why. We have got through the Parnell smash with a success which shows our political constitution is stronger than anyone ever thought it was, and every one who enters politics knows that there never is a time when rocks do not frown in every sea we have to traverse, and difficulties with men and measures are facing the leaders in every direction. It certainly is a wonder why men who can make a choice of professions like to enter such a career, but we are all past having a choice and must make the best of what we have to do. But you are the last person to whom I should address a homily and I the last to give one, for I take it you like politics far better than I do, as much better as you are so much more successful and powerful in their pursuit. . . .

### III

In his speeches in the country—at Ashton-under-Lyne, Glasgow, Derby and elsewhere—Harcourt foreshadowed



a programme including the settlement of the liquor question, disestablishment in Wales and a change in the economic condition of the agricultural labourer's life. He was present with Mr. Morley on October 2 at the conference of the National Liberal Federation at Newcastle at which the famous Newcastle Programme was formulated. On this occasion Gladstone was present, and made an important declaration of policy on Ireland and foreign and home questions. In the course of the speech, which included a tribute to Harcourt's success in disposing of the "monstrous and enormous claims for compensation" (for licenses) which the Government had set up, he made a reference to the emergence of the new "Labour Party." The report of the Council of the Federation had referred to this fact as a disaster; but Gladstone took quite a contrary view on the subject, observing that "it is for the benefit of us all that there should be a considerable increase of the number of Labour members in Parliament." In December, before Gladstone's departure with Mr. Morley to Biarritz, there was a conference at Spencer's house, Althorp, between Gladstone, Harcourt, Morley, Rosebery and St. John and in sending a story of the "great palaver" to him Harcourt said, "Mr. G. is in great form, and like a two-year-old. I think I never saw him in better spirits or less anxious and excited." A fortnight later (December 21), Mr. Morley sent the same story of Gladstone's vitality from Biarritz. "I have never known him so gay, buoyant and inexhaustible," he said; "We talk mainly on literature and men of the past, and far-off things and battles long ago—with very rare excursions towards Schnadhorst and the retention of the Irish members." "A far younger man than either you or I" he wrote a week later.

In the middle of January, Mr. Morley returned, leaving Gladstone behind, and writing to Harcourt he said:

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

95, ELM PARK GARDENS, January 17, '92.—Here I am once more in my own den. I arrived last night from Paris, where I wound up my trip with three extremely lively days. I had a good talk with

Renan at his house ; ditto with Taine at his ; I dined with a score of literary and political notables at a sort of Griffion's Club ; and I had lunch with Ribot at the F.O., to say nothing of hearing Floquet at the Chamber, and seeing the *Taming of the Shrew* at the Français, and a very funny piece at the Bouffes.

It was a particularly pleasant end to a thoroughly successful outing. Mr. G. has been in his most charming mood, from start to finish ; not too vehement, nor preoccupied, nor over-exercised about big things, nor little ones either. We talked hardly any of the politics of the day, but his stream of reminiscence of the politics of other days was worth all modern politics put together. He is a delightful comrade, and splendid old fellow. . . .

He proceeded to relate to Harcourt the substance of his conversation with Ribot, who was concerned about Salisbury's Guildhall speech, the attitude of England on Egypt, the anti-French tone of the *Standard* and *Times*, concluding with a record of a disagreement with Schnadhorst about the campaign. Harcourt replied :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, January 18, 1892.—I was delighted to hear that the truant had returned, and that he has had such a *skittish* time with his young *pals*.

I am very impatient to see you, but that can only be by your coming to Malwood. If you wish to know why Mæcenās himself cannot extract me from my Sabine Farm, read Horace, Ep. Lib. i. 7.

" Officiosaque sedulitas et opella forensis  
Adducit febres et testamenta resignat.  
                    . . . . . Vates tuus et sibi parcet  
*Contractusque leget* ; te, dulcis amice, reviset  
Cum Zephyris, si concedes, et hirundine prima."

I find in my Horace a note on *Contractus* which just fits me—  
" *Contractus* in parvum cubiculum quod facile vaporetur, jacens in lectulo, involutus vestibus."

So you have returned at once to your old amusement of defying Schnadhorst. Rash Titan ! You will resist in vain. I have long ago discovered that and have ceased to struggle against *Ἀνδύμη*.

This war of the Gods cannot be prevented, and I have sent Loulou up with a handful of dust to compose the strife. He will make you fall on each other's necks. . . .

You seem to have had a gay time in Paris and an orgy of libation and politics. There was a lovely irony about your exposition to Ribot of Rosebery's views on Egypt. You see what that wiseacre Dilke has been saying on the matter ? Have you read E. Dicey on

the subject ? It is a nasty subject *quacunqve viâ*. I foresee that it may drive us into one or the other of the Continental alliances—which is *anathema maranatha*. . . .

Before Gladstone's return a storm, which involved Gladstone and Harcourt in some controversy, arose apropos of the leadership of the Party in the 'seventies by Hartington, who had now become Duke of Devonshire. It arose out of an accusation by *The Times* that Gladstone had treated Hartington with ingratitude in 1880 in superseding him in the leadership, after he (Hartington) had reconstructed the Party pulverized by Gladstone. Wemyss Reid in the *Speaker* took up the cudgels on behalf of Gladstone, and suggested that Hartington only stood aside after failing to form a Government of his own. This angered Harcourt, who, in a letter to Gladstone, now at Paris on his way home, said :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

18, ALBEMARLE STREET, February 24, 1892.— . . . A very foolish and mischievous discussion has arisen here in the newspapers originating in a silly and utterly unfounded attack by Wemyss Reid in the *Speaker* charging as an offence against Hartington that he tried to form a Government of his own in 1880. It is specially annoying to me as I know of my own knowledge that it is untrue. From the relations in which I stood to him in the House of Commons during his leadership I must have been amongst the very first to have known if he had contemplated such an attempt. The absurdity of the whole thing is that, if the charge were true, it involves no imputation on H. He was naturally and constitutionally sent for by the Sovereign as the recognized leader of the Opposition to form a Government on the resignation of the Ministry. It was not only his right but his *bounden* duty to do so if he saw any prospect of forming a strong and stable administration. I have always understood that he from the first represented to the Q. that you alone could undertake the task. Under pressure, as I suppose, he agreed to ascertain personally your views, and being in possession of them declined the office, and repeated his advice that you should be sent for. Nothing is more certain than that beyond ascertaining your views he took no other steps towards an attempt to form an administration.

Without the knowledge of those views he had no means of satisfying the Queen that he was justified in refusing to obey her commands. In all this he seems to me to have acted in a perfectly constitutional and straightforward manner as indeed he was sure to do. There is very strong feeling here in which I entirely share that this attack upon him in the *Speaker* is most unjust and unfounded. J. Morley

and I are doing what we can to induce Wemyss Reid to desist from a proceeding which is most injurious to the interests of our Party. What aggravated the matter is that the mouth of Hartington is necessarily closed. . . .

Gladstone replied in a long memorandum in which he pointed out that the dispute had originated not with the *Speaker* but with *The Times*, which had accused him (Gladstone) of gross personal ingratitude to Hartington, a charge which he thought to be "one of the blackest that can be lodged against any public man." On the question of fact as to whether Hartington endeavoured to form a government he held that the *Speaker* spoke the truth. "For, on his return from Windsor Lord Hartington inquired of me whether I would become a member of a cabinet of which he was to be the head. My reply was in the negative; but it, and the reasons for it, are not relevant to the present purpose." Replying to Harcourt's animadversions on Wemyss Reid's discussion of subjects which the Privy Councillor's oath and the seal of confidence between colleagues prohibited Hartington from dealing with, Gladstone explained at length, with various precedents, what could and could not be discussed, and then proceeded:

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

. . . Upon these three matters, I am certainly with and not against the *Speaker*. My judgment, were they matters of opinion, might be a biased one: but they seem to be purely matters of fact. One matter of opinion, however, I cannot wholly omit. When a gross and cutting charge had been made against me (and also I believe echoed in some quarters), and when I saw the *Speaker* (with admixtures in which I have no concern) take up the cudgels to defend me against this charge, I did not think I could *honourably* leave Mr. Wemyss Reid in ignorance of an important part of his case, and I made known to him that Lord Hartington had not abandoned his task without an effort (what effort I did not say), although I also said that I could not think he was to blame for having so acted. I had at some sacrifice left the charge in *The Times* unnoticed, but I could not allow friends, in their efforts to defend me, to be prejudiced by want of information on material facts.

It was an awkward situation, Reid attacking Hartington in the Press, Harcourt attacking Reid to Gladstone,

Gladstone defending Reid to his colleagues. An explosion seemed imminent. Mr. Morley wrote to Harcourt imploring him not to intervene in the matter publicly.

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

. . . His [Reid's] position, *armed as he is with Mr. G.'s letter*, is simple enough, and nothing that you can say will affect it. . . . If the thing goes further, Mr. G. will have to come forward with his story, and any COLLISION between *him and you would mightily scandalize our Party*. That is what I am thinking most about. Brett's letter to-day<sup>1</sup> puts the case for Hartington as clearly as possible. Why more?

I am willing, if you like, to join you in writing to Mr. G., urging him to leave things as they are. At the same time, I fear that he may feel bound not to leave Reid in the lurch. If so, he'll write something. So much the worse. Why need you intervene? Hartington is well able to take care of himself, and one word from him will settle the question. Your authority is superfluous. The public will take his word. If he does not care to descend into the arena himself, why should you? Don't let the conflagration spread, if you can help it, and keep out of it.

Harcourt contented himself with writing a further letter to Gladstone replying to "his precedents for public statements of what has passed between individuals on the formation or failure to form administrations," but concluding that "it would be a great blessing if the thing would blow over as everything does in time." The position, however, was critical, for in effect the implication of Harcourt's argument was that Gladstone's communication with Reid was not in accordance with constitutional practice. Gladstone, however, was in no humour to quarrel. He thanked Harcourt for his frankness and kindness. "Indeed between friends frankness is kindness." He gently repeated his axioms as to what were and what were not privileged communications, and concluded: "'Sufficient for the day,' says Sydney Smith, 'is the nonsense thereof.' So I bid you good-bye until to-morrow." Next day (February 29) Gladstone was back in London, and Mr.

<sup>1</sup> In *The Times* of February 24, 1892. This letter was written by Mr. Brett (Lord Esher), after consultation of Hartington's correspondence on the subject and his own journals written at the time.

Morley, still active to keep the peace, wrote to Harcourt :

. . . I saw E. W. H. (Hamilton) at Downing Street this afternoon—and urged him to let it all lie as low as can be, and above all things, not to have any syllable of *writing* from Mr. G. He quite sees this, and will do his best. I think it will be all right.

. It was all right. Gladstone and Devonshire preserved silence in public, and in the midst of many other events, the opening of Parliament, the death of the eventual heir to the throne, etc., the storm subsided, and was forgotten.

## CHAPTER X

### GLADSTONE'S LAST CABINET

The Liberal Revival—Mr. Balfour Leader of the House—Mr. Morley and the Eight Hours Bill—Lady Carlisle causes searchings of heart—Ulster demonstration—General Election—Gladstone's health—Difficult Cabinet making—Lord Rosebery's reluctance—Proscription of Labouchere—Harcourt's eyesight.

WHEN the new Session of Parliament opened on February 9, 1892, Gladstone was still, by his doctor's commands, abroad, and the duties of leader of the Opposition fell to Harcourt. It was the seventh session of the Parliament, and under the influence of a striking Liberal victory in Rossendale (Hartington's old constituency) Harcourt was urged to demand a dissolution. He was entirely opposed to this course. "Upon what ground can a Government be called upon to dissolve while it still commands a majority of between 60 and 70?" he said, writing to Mr. Morley:

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, *January 28.*— . . . I know there is wild talk of obstruction so as to make it impossible for the Government to get along, but of all policies that seems to me to be the most short-sighted. If as we believe we are going to have a majority at the election, could there be anything more stupid than ourselves to set the example of such a course and thereby instigate and justify them in following our example. . . . They are never tired of talking of the methods they will employ by the help of the House of Lords to force us to a dissolution at once as soon as we come back, and then these wiseacres want us to invent an instrument by which they can effect their purpose without the House of Lords. . . .

From St. Raphael, Gladstone wrote to Harcourt against pressing for a dissolution, though he thought "a taunt

for not dissolving may be fair enough." "Any motive of active aggression is nonsense, excepting from H. Fowler who was here on Sunday in his most formidable vein," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (January 29). "You and I may shrink in our pusillanimous way, but he won't, etc., etc., etc. The cock won't crow twice before he'll have been detected in making a deal with the Tory Whip at the back of the Chair."

\* On the eve of the critical session which would almost certainly see the Government out of office, the Opposition were not a wholly happy family. The intentions of Lord Rosebery were obscure. He had done splendid work as Chairman of the London County Council, but had now gone to Naples, privately intimating that he was "no longer in public life." "How tiresome all this sort of thing is," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (January 26). "My plan is so much better—to say to *myself* that I am *going* to leave public life. I get all the comfort of that prospect, without plaguing other people." Harcourt replied :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, *January 28*.—I am sorry for what you tell me about Rosebery, though not surprised. After all it is pretty Fanny's way and we have survived a good deal of it for many years. I am very glad to know that you never inform anyone except yourself of your fixed intention to retire from public life. I hope you may be trusted to keep that a secret.

I am not really sorry that Rosebery is not to return to the County Council. It is impossible for Cæsar to come back as a private soldier. It is only presidents of the United States who return to their desks.

Besides, I know no one except Spencer who can at one and the same time work a County Council, hunt the Pytchley and settle the details of Home Rule. *Non omnia possumus omnes*. For my part when there are big things to do, I like to have plenty of time to think over them before making the irretreivable plunge. I wish that much greater men would sometimes do the same, and we should be saved from many of the difficulties with which we are now surrounded. I confess the more certain our victory appears to be the less I am able to foresee what we are going to do with it. However *alors comme alors*. It is like the sensation on board ship in a heavy sea ; it seems impossible that you should surmount the great waves as they come at you, but somehow or other you do, if only the crew



stick together—it will, however, be a motley crew, and we shall have to depend for its discipline on the instinct of self-preservation.

When a few days later Mr. Morley wrote saying that he could not attend the semi-official dinner of the leaders on the eve of the opening of Parliament, Harcourt wrote :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, February 4.—I think on the whole you are rather worse than Rosebery. I should like to take you both and shake you in a bag.

The notion of your not coming to the dinner on Monday is preposterous. It is of the nature of a Cabinet dinner, which by the British Constitution overrides all engagements. You must know the sinister rumours to which your absence on such an occasion would give rise. It would certainly supply the well-informed London Correspondents with materials for a week. There would be several hundred different versions of our final quarrel. There is nothing more to say about it than that you *must come*. As to your having people at home—what people? *Was für Leute?* I guess without your telling me. It is a sort of Cato St. conspiracy, but I will take care that you are arrested with the dynamite. It is no joking matter. You have *got to come*, so there is no use saying any more about it.

When Parliament reassembled (February 9) it was strangely shorn of its prominent figures. Parnell no longer sat, impassive but foreboding, his hat a little tilted over his pallid face, in his old seat below the gangway; the amiable W. H. Smith had gone from the Treasury bench and his place was taken by Mr. Balfour, and Hartington had vanished to "another place." In Gladstone's absence, Harcourt replied to the motion on the Address, and after alluding in sympathetic terms to the deaths of the Duke of Clarence and of the late leader of the House, he fixed on the suggestion for the alteration of the relation between the Treasury and the Bank of England as the chief point of attack on the Government programme. He accused Goschen of "fumbling with the currency of the country," and contrasted what he regarded as his casual and personal way of raising these great problems in after-dinner speeches in the country with the weighty procedure

of financiers in former times, illustrating his argument by abundant historical examples. He was, as Gladstone said, "one of the few men alive who seems to be aware that we have a constitution," and was always peculiarly sensitive to any departure from constitutional practice. His allusions to Ireland were largely concerned with the insults to the Irish people in ministerial speeches, and referring to the Prime Minister as the chief offender—it was the time of the "Hottentot" speech—he reminded him that, as Lord Robert Cecil, he had in an eloquent passage given the real cause of Irish backwardness. "I am afraid," Lord Robert had said, after describing the causes usually given, "the one thing that has been peculiar to Ireland has been the Government of England." He commended the whole passage to the conscience of Lord Salisbury. Writing to Gladstone on the debate on the Address, he said: "I was obliged to find topics in Goschen's currency abortions and collateral topics. I learn that even the Tories were pleased to hear him saluted as a 'fumbler' in finance. I glided over Egypt as somewhat rotten ice, and tried to fix attention on the incredible indiscretions of Salisbury's Exeter speech." Of the new Leader of the House, as leader, he formed an indifferent opinion. "The only reputation which is really rising," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "is that of the deceased W. H. Smith by comparison with his predecessor and his successor. Randolph fell through temper, Arthur through over-education and philosophy, the worst qualities perhaps of the lot because the least necessary."

His own reputation was at the maximum, but the feeling towards him was extraordinarily mixed, even on his own side. The Parnellites were more bitter against him than against the Tories. Their bitterness was accentuated by his opposition to the motion for amnesty to the dynamitards, and he was attacked with extreme venom. William Redmond suggested that he was ungrateful to the Fenians, for Fenianism had had a good deal to do with convincing him on the Home Rule question, but Harcourt assured him

that, on the contrary, it was Fenianism that prevented him adopting Home Rule sooner than he did.

From Parliament, Harcourt made an excursion to the East End to strike a blow in the County Council election campaign which was then in progress. In a speech at Whitechapel (February 17) he attacked the vices of London government as the Tory Act had left it. On the subjects of the unity of London and the rating of ground landlords he made declarations which are still relevant :

. . . When in the Liberal Government I was responsible for affairs, I introduced a London Government Bill which made London a whole, which included within it the traditions and the resources of the City of London, and which made the Guildhall the headquarters of the municipality of London. That, in my opinion, is the principle which is just. It is the only principle upon which London reform can be finally founded, and I venture to say with Lord Rosebery that is, perhaps, the most important of all the changes which will have to be made. . . . In my opinion, the exemption of the ground landlord from the payment of rates is the greatest injustice. The whole expense of the improvement of London has been placed to the extent of millions of money upon the occupier. As the leases fall in the ground landlord who has contributed nothing derives the whole advantage. In my opinion that is an unjust provision. There is a great cry of confiscation raised. It is always my experience that the men who cry out loudly against confiscation are the men who have derived advantage from plunder themselves. . . .

The election ended in a great triumph for the Progressives, who won eighty-three seats to the Moderates' thirty-five. "Saturday's victory," wrote Harcourt to Arnold Morley (March 8), "is no doubt a very great event. Amongst its incidents it is a good thing to have brought out Rosebery and made him fly his flag again. I am sorry not to have seen the countenances of Causton and J. Stuart. They must have shone like Moses in his descent from the Mount, and the oil must have run down the beard of S. Montagu." A less happy omen for the future disclosed itself a little later when a private Miners' Eight Hours Bill produced a sharp cleavage on the Opposition front bench. Writing to Lady Harcourt (March 24) Harcourt said :

. . . We had a good debate and division last night on the Conspiracy Resolution. To-day we have the eight hours for miners, a very difficult and embarrassing situation. J. Morley is bound to vote against for his Durham miners who are dead against it. I am equally bound to vote for it, as all the Derbyshire miners are strong in its favour. Mr. G. is not to vote at all. Most of the Front Bench will, I think, vote for the Bill. It is not an agreeable situation, but it will have great consequences in the future as the question will not sleep. . . .

• There was a big majority against the Bill, though Chamberlain and Churchill with other ministerialists supported it ; but the support given to it by the bulk of the Liberals caused grave concern to Mr. Morley, who was deeply committed against the eight hours' policy. Writing to Harcourt, he said :

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

95, ELM PARK GARDENS, March 26, 1892.— . . . Pray, believe how much I feel your friendliness in writing, and how thoroughly I am alive to your constant goodwill and indulgence to me. I have never known a stauncher comrade, and only one as staunch.

I cannot conceal from myself how much Wednesday's vote changes my relations to the front bench. You will be bound after that vote to bring in an Eight Hours Bill. I will have no part nor lot in any government that brings in eight hours Bills. Other labour questions will undoubtedly follow, when the same divergence will reappear. That has taken place which I apprehended. The Labour Party—that is, the most headstrong and unscrupulous and shallow of those who speak for Labour—has captured the Liberal Party. Even worse—the Liberal Party, on our bench at any rate, has surrendered *sans phrase*, without a word of explanation or vindication.

I do not complain and I do not blame. I only note the facts as they are. And for the present I don't know that I need do more. Sufficient for the day is the evil. . . .

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, March 27.— . . . This does not seem to me the moment for argument. I think you know the reasons sufficiently by which my course has been governed. But I may be allowed to say this much. We have breasted like the companions of the old Ulysses many stormy seas together. *O passi graviora*. . . . I am an older and more weather-beaten salt than you are, and believe me nothing ever really turns out as badly as it promises.

I have never concealed from you my opinion of the dark impossi-

bilities of the future. Even *with* you I don't see how we are to carry on, *without* you it is out of the question. Rather than find myself severed from you I would ten times over desire to lose the election. A great responsibility lies upon you. Permit me to say to you, you have no right to quit the ship, and leave the crew to their fate. It may be we shall hang separately, but at least let us hang together.

You must admit that the decisive moment has not yet arrived. Let me entreat you not under your present state of feeling to say anything in public which is *irremediable*. Give at least *spatium requiemque dolori*.

Good-bye my "*trusty frien*" till to-morrow.

The eight hours' question was not the only matter that troubled the waters for the Opposition and caused a certain disagreement between Harcourt and Mr. Morley. Another subject that involved collision was emerging from a passive and academic phase into the sphere of practical politics. The Women's Liberal Federation, of which Mrs. Gladstone had been president, was rent into two factions, one of which, led by Lady Carlisle, demanded that woman's suffrage should be a plank in the Federation platform, the other being opposed. On the women's question Harcourt remained, as he had always been, a frank Philistine, rejoicing in the most antiquated views in regard to the place of women in society. He would have welcomed the disappearance of the Women's Liberal Federation altogether, and was anxious that Mrs. Gladstone should resign. Writing to Gladstone, he said :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

MALWOOD, April 17, 1892.—I am (as I doubt not you and Mrs. Gladstone are also) pestered by the feuds of the Ladies' Federation to which justice could only be done by the author of the *Θεσμοπορίδες*.

The excellent but somewhat ductile Lady Aberdeen has tried her hand at compromises which seem to have all failed.

Lady Carlisle is on the "warpath" and in the presence of that redoubtable Amazon counsels of peace are in vain.

It seems that last week, having dragged A. Morley out of bed, she then appeared at John Morley's breakfast table with the copy of a letter she had addressed to Mrs. Gladstone which J. Morley has sent to me. It is a production full of cajolery mixed with menaces of what will occur if she is not allowed to have her own way.

John Morley writes to me full of perplexity, but to me the situation

is very clear. It resolves itself into one simple point. Is Lady Carlisle to capture "the machine" and to "boss" the Women's Federation? And if she does is it possible for Mrs. Gladstone and the other ladies to remain? . . .

There seems to be only one practical question, viz., whether the present majority should remain, fight and be beaten, or whether they should quietly retire. Having heard all that was to be said I had no doubt that the latter was the most dignified and least injurious course, both for the sex and the Party. . . .

Lady Aberdeen writes to me of hoping to exercise a "moderate influence," but you might as well try to moderate Niagara as to moderate Lady Carlisle. Her great object is, of course, to keep the name of Mrs. Gladstone at the head of an association which she is in fact to control and to work for her own purposes. . . .

It seems to me that the true ground on which you and Mrs. G. should withdraw your patronage is the *fact of the split* without condescending on any particulars or pronouncing on the merits of either Party, but regarding your Presidency as possible only in the case of a united association. . . .

"I am thinking," replied Harcourt, in reply to a letter from Gladstone, "of composing a comedy to be entitled 'As you don't like it,' with our Rosalind [Lady Carlisle] as the heroine and myself as the melancholy Jacques of the Forest." "As you know," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley, "I absolutely forbade my belongings to have anything to do with the concern (the W.L.F.) from the first as I always foresaw it must end in an ugly row. . . . I am suffering under deluges of female correspondence which satisfy me more than ever of the total incapacity of the sex for public affairs." Mr. Morley did not share Harcourt's attitude. Replying to him (April 19), he said:

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

It is preposterous to expect that, if you invite women to form federations for party and political purposes, they will not eventually demand the franchise, which is the regular instrument for such purposes. If you want to keep women out of votes, you must keep them out of federations.

However, I don't argue the question. I think your line dangerous in view of the election, and I have written half a dozen sentences to Mrs. Gladstone to say that my view is against resignation—if she cares to know my view, which after all is of no importance to anybody but the owner.

"Why in heaven's name are you so solicitous about the election?" replied Harcourt (April 20) from Malwood, and continued:

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

... I thought we were all agreed that we were profoundly indifferent to that event. I would rather lose twenty general elections than submit myself body and soul to Countess Rosalinda. As Mr. Augustus Model said, "I will never be taken alive."

I agree with you altogether about Federations—especially female federations, and hold altogether with Aristophanes on those subjects. I have still, in spite of my recent progress in revolutionary principles under your tuition, preserved a sneaking regard for the old British constitution, and I mean to stick to it in spite of the patriots—male and female. What, however, is much more important than all federations is that I observe from my oriel window the clouds coming from the S.W. and I feel like Elijah, or perhaps Ahab, at the prospect of rain.

"I like your lazy good-tempered letter and your lazy good-tempered speech," replied Mr. Morley (April 21). "Unlike you, I care not whether your advice is taken or mine. There are two main divisions of fools, as I have always heard—those who give advice and those who don't take it."

"Yes, I am lazy and good-tempered, my dear J. M.," Harcourt replied (April 24), "and if you ever prevent me from being the first I shall certainly cease to be the last. I am coming up to London on Tuesday only to vote against the women. After that I think I shall go to South America or some well-settled country and leave the affairs of the United Kingdom with confidence in your hands and Mr. Blaine's."

The visit to London to "vote against the women" was in connection with Rollitt's Women's Franchise Bill, which was defeated on second reading by the narrow majority of 175 votes to 152 in a division in which the parties were indiscriminately mingled.

## II

By this time the shadow of the General Election had fallen over Parliament, and the drums of battle were sounding in the country. In Ulster a great Unionist Convention

was held in June to rally the Orange forces against the Home Rule scheme, which was certain to follow the General Election, of the result of which there was now little doubt. "Men of the North, once more I say we will not have Home Rule," was the text of the Duke of Abercorn, who presided over the gathering of 12,000 delegates at Belfast. Colonel Saunderson, one of the Ulster leaders, had invited Harcourt, in a letter to *The Times*, to be present. "I have never witnessed a good Belfast 'faction fight' which I believe is about this time in season," replied Harcourt gaily, "and I am sure that under your proffered safe-conduct I should find it at once an entertaining and instructive spectacle for those who like myself belong to the party of 'Law and Order.'"

*Harcourt to Colonel Saunderson.*

. . . When your hypothetical insurrection is a little more advanced (he continued) and war is actually declared, I may perhaps take advantage of your offer and select a place as spectator on your staff.

I do not know if your campaign contemplates a march upon London against the Crown and the Parliament; if so I might meet you half-way at Derby, which was the place where the Liberals of the last century encountered the "loyal" and "patriotic" Highlanders who disapproved of the "Act of Settlement" and resolved to resist it.

They also were a "powerful section" of the Scotch people, who objected to a transfer of their allegiance.

I presume that might be the point where the rebel army would effect its junction with the ducal contingent from Chatsworth under the command of the Lord-Lt. of the County. . . .

In the meanwhile I fear I must trust to the ordinary channels for information as to the mobilization of the Orange array. But I can assure you that I shall watch your strategy with interest and try to alarm myself as much as I can manage.

But though he did not go to Ulster, Harcourt was active in England, delivering speeches in London, Bristol and Braintree. Speaking to the Eighty Club (March 25) on the adoption of Liberal policies by a Conservative Government, he said: •

. . . My observation leads me to believe that the political animal is very much like the natural animal—(laughter, and hear, hear)—



and each of them has its appropriate diet. There are graminivorous and there are carnivorous animals, but if you feed a lion on bread and butter—(laughter)—or a horse upon beefsteak, well, you get a sick lion and you get a horse that is very much out of condition. (Laughter, and hear, hear.)

In his speech at Braintree (May 26) he dealt with Salisbury as the "Malaprop of Politics," and suggested the collection of his "blazing indiscretions" to illustrate "things one would rather have not said."

. . . First of all a good many years ago there was the famous Conservative surrender, when Mr. Disraeli was denounced as an unprincipled adventurer for giving household suffrage to the Boroughs. Then there were the Irish people compared to Hottentots. Then there were the Queen's subjects of India who were disparaged as "black men," because a native of Hindustan presented himself as a candidate to an English constituency. Then there were the "hereditary and irreconcilable foe" of England, the Irish people, "a hostile Ireland on our flank." Then for the rural districts there was the offer of circuses as a substitute for village councils. . . . They (the Tories) have taken advantage of every possible excuse to postpone giving life to these rural communities—giving what I have ventured to call "The Village for the Villagers"; to breathe if it were possible some reality into the farce which is called the Parish Vestry; to give to these men a real interest in their own affairs, something to relieve the dull deadness and monotony of their daily toil; something that is worthy of English citizens; not the circuses with which the Prime Minister of England mocked them. . . .

With the prorogation of Parliament on June 28, the appeal to the country was made. "I am sorry not to see you this side of Niagara," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. "I go into the fight with good hopes much raised by my Manchester visit. The meetings marvellous. . . . What is far more important is that we have a report from Bobby's tutor saying that in his first six weeks he is *facile princeps* in his class, and as he has come home with an honourable scar on his chin obtained in cricket his future may be regarded as assured." At Derby, he found things "as right as a trivet," but he told Mr. Morley "there were cries from the Midlands—"they evidently fear *proximum Josephum*." His own majority, 2,000, though "not to be

sneezed at," was less than he expected <sup>1</sup>; and as the polls came in he feared "the worst of all results, a small majority." "I lead a pleasant life here," he wrote from Derby to Mr. Morley in the midst of his contest, "chiefly in interviews with panic-stricken M.P.'s who insist upon my attending their death-beds like a fashionable doctor." Having secured his own seat at Derby, Harcourt went on a whirlwind campaign in the doubtful constituencies, speaking at Nottingham, Hull, Chesterfield, Eastbourne, and Lymington. "There's an example for you," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "After Tuesday in next week I hope to be at peace at Malwood. I shall have much need of it. Apart from the physical fatigue I am so deadly bored at saying the same thing over and over again."

When the election results were complete, the state of parties in the new House was as follows :

Liberal and Labour . . . .	274	Conservatives . . . . .	269
Nationalists . . . . .	81	Liberal Unionists . . . .	46
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	355		315

Commenting on the result, in a letter to Mr. Morley, Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

45, BROOK STREET, W., July 10.— . . . It is a great thing anyhow—*si non datur ultra*—to have extinguished the 1886 majority of 116. That is what has come of all the virtue and the intelligence, the rank and the wealth, and the beer, the Diceys, Argylls, Saundersons, T. W. Russells, Chamberlains, Hartington and Co. It is a great thing to have accomplished if we do no more.

As to the future, that must take care of itself. It is a situation which would have suited the game of Palmerston or of Dizzy, whether it can be handled by sublimer spirits remains to be seen. . . .

I have been delighted by a sentence I have just read in R. L. Stevenson's last book. "I can't see what anyone wants to live for anyway. If I could get into some one else's apple tree and be about

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<sup>1</sup> The figures were :—

Harcourt . . . . .	7,507
Roe . . . . .	7,389
Hextall . . . . .	5,546
Haslam . . . . .	5,363

twelve years old and just stick the way I was eating stolen apples, I don't say. But there's no sense in this grown-up business sailorizing, politics, the piety mill and all the rest of it. Good clean drowning is good enough for me."

Come and be twelve years old and get into my apple tree and just stick that way eating stolen apples. It is better than sailorizing (with Rosebery), politics, or the piety mill.

### III

Back at Malwood, Harcourt sent out warning epistles to some of his comrades, the nature of which will be gathered from the following extract from his letter to Mr. Morley (July 13):

#### *Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

. . . Above all *don't allow yourself to be committed to any cause at present*. I have preached the same doctrine to Spencer who tells me he is summoned to Hawarden. I know the old plan will be tried of "nobbling" each man separately and the intense dislike there is to having anything like joint consultation or common action. It was this which did the mischief in 1886 when Spencer, Granville and yourself were "bagged" separately and not a word said to Hartington, Chamberlain, Dilke, myself and others. If I were asked to Hawarden (which I *shall not* be) I should say I did not feel at liberty to commit myself without a full consultation of all the principal people *in London*. . . .

Harcourt himself was not free from suspicion of "nobbling" new members, and there was much discussion in the Press on the subject of "conferences" at his house, 45, Brook Street, which were assumed to imply that he was lukewarm in the matter of giving precedence to Home Rule, and was formulating a Radical English programme of his own. Mr. Morley was himself somewhat disquieted by these activities, which, indeed, seem to have left a lasting impression on his mind. "I cruise under the green flag, come what will," he wrote to Harcourt (July 17). "If we founder at least let us go down with honour." He was concerned about Gladstone, to whom the result of the election and his own diminished majority in Midlothian had been a sore disappointment. Writing (July 16) to Harcourt, he said:

. . . But I must tell you, **STRICTLY** between ourselves, that the physical decline, in consequence of the reaction from the lofty hopes of a three-figure majority and all the rest of it, rather alarms me. More definite, alas, is the danger in which he finds himself in the region of *sight*—now seriously threatened. A tragedy indeed. Only let us take care that the last scenes of Act V. shall not be unworthy and ignoble. . . .

• “As to the future, I am as you know deeply bound to Ireland, my only pledge, and tied in honour to public life, when I am prosecuting it against nature,” Gladstone wrote to Harcourt when on his way to Braemar (July 14). “Nevertheless I see these things—had we not put English, Scotch and Welsh questions well forward we should probably have had no majority at all. Ireland herself has by her incidents a good deal damaged herself and us.” Harcourt was, in fact, not against proceeding with Ireland forthwith, and urged the repeal of the Coercion law at once as a challenge to the House of Lords, but in view of the exiguous majority he insisted that the only way to hold it together was by a strong Radical programme. “When Parliament meets in February next,” he wrote to Gladstone (July 16), “we must be prepared to produce bills on (1) Temperance Reform and Local Option, (2) Village Councils with control of schools, (3) Registration reform and one man one vote, (4) Payment of members, (5) Welsh Disestablishment. This I think is the *very* minimum of what we should bring forward and is only a fraction of what you pledged us to at Newcastle.” To Mr. Morley, who suggested that the disappointing result of the election was because they had gone “too fast and too far,” he wrote :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, July 15.—. . . I will not argue with you on the question of “too fast and too far” at present though I do not agree with you. When the Whigs left the Liberal Party they forced the pace and it will go on with accumulated velocity.

In a big storm safety is sometimes to be found only in “cracking on” and we must “run” the ship, she can’t “lay to.” We must play the parts of “daring pilots in extremity.” So I will say to you as William IV did to Codrington at Navarino, “Go it, John.” . . .

But a more urgent question than the programme now occupied the minds of the Liberal leaders. The Tory Government had decided to meet the new Parliament, but this departure was only a matter of form, and the constitution of the new Cabinet filled the early days of August with agitated meetings, and infinite comings and goings, which make the Journal at this period as full of movement as a dime novel. Gladstone's difficulties turned chiefly upon Lord Rosebery and Labouchere. In the case of the latter, there was a strong demand from the Radicals for his inclusion in the Government, but the action of Labouchere on the Civil List grants had created great resentment in high quarters, and his proscription became a heated subject of controversy. An extract from the Journal, relating to an interview between Gladstone and Lewis Harcourt, will indicate the nature of the difficulty :

*August 2.*— . . . Gladstone went on to speak of Labouchere, saying that there seemed to be a conflict of opinion between Spencer and W. V. H. as to the objections at Windsor. W. V. H. is under the strong impression that the exclusion applies to *all* Office, but Spencer thinks it only meant the Cabinet. Gladstone wishes this to be cleared up by Spencer or W. V. H. writing to Ponsonby to ask for particulars. Gladstone added that he thought very strongly that the Queen had an absolute right to decide on all questions affecting her household, in which he includes such questions as that of invitations to and receptions at Court. He said, "The Queen has been very good about some similar questions which have arisen, for instance, Lord Melbourne's case, throughout which she stuck to him, but then there was the satisfactory verdict which I in my simplicity of mind thought a just one, but I believe that was not the view taken by many people at the time."

He said of Labouchere, "I do not like to leave any of our hard workers out or seem to treat them badly."

I told all this on my return to W. V. H., who said he would certainly not write to Ponsonby on the matter, as their conversation had been quite explicit, and was to the effect that the Royal exclusion of Labby applied to all Office generally. . . . [H.]

A week later the Journal records Gladstone as "much disturbed at the Queen's insistence on the exclusion of Labouchere," and eventually the Government was formed without a place being found for him.

The case of Lord Rosebery was the entirely contrary one of inducing him to join the Government. In the midst of the perturbations following the election he had gone to the West of Scotland and was understood to have decided to go out of public life. "Pray come to town at once," Harcourt wired to him (August 1), following his telegram with two urgent letters, in the course of which he said :

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

45, BROOK STREET, August 1.— . . . You will have seen in the papers the account of Mr. Gladstone's illness.

Though naturally everybody puts the best face upon it, still it is impossible at his age no' to regard every serious ailment with great anxiety. I need not picture to you what are the heavy responsibilities and cares which fall upon us all in such a situation. Nothing except the most cordial desire to help one another can enable us to meet the difficulties with which we are face to face and acquit ourselves with decency and honour in the presence of what may be in store in the future. I greatly mistake your character if you should be unwilling to give us your aid and counsel and support in this critical conjuncture. . . . There may be decisions of the greatest importance to be taken at very short notice. I feel sure you will not be wanting in the offices of friendship to your friends who so much desire and need them.

The Journal records (August 4) that "John Morley is to go to Dalmeny to-night to see Rosebery and put pressure upon him"; and two days later: "W. V. H. and I went to see John Morley on his return from Scotland. He said that he had brought his bird with him, and that he, Rosebery, would now in all probability join."

The course of the negotiations may be briefly indicated by extracts from the Journal :

*August 10.*— . . . J. Morley writes that Rosebery arrived in London last night and will see Gladstone to-morrow. . . .

*August 11.*— . . . Algvy West told me at dinner at Armitstead's to-night that it was all up with Rosebery, and that he definitely declines, but gives no ground except disinclination for Office and politics.

The interview between Gladstone and Rosebery was most touching and painful, and they were both nearly in tears. . . .

*August 13.*— . . . John Morley left luncheon at Spencer's to go to see Rosebery in Berkeley Square by appointment, but at 4 p.m. sent

us a letter to say that he "found our curious friend flown"—he does not know where. . . .

*August 14.*— . . . Gladstone will submit Rosebery's name to the Queen to-morrow, but tell her that he does so without authority, and ask her to write a personal appeal to Rosebery on her own behalf.

*August 15.*— . . . Herschell returned again at 3 o'clock with the welcome news that a telegram had arrived at Carlton Gardens at 1.30 from Rosebery at Mentmore saying "So be it." What a relief that it is not now necessary for Gladstone to humiliate himself by asking the Queen to put personal pressure on Rosebery, or for the Cabinet to be in the position of having R. amongst them as the nominee of the Court after declining to join at their and Gladstone's request.

*August 16.*— . . . Rosebery sent a note to Brook Street to W. V. H. this morning with a large framed photo of the Hermes at Athens—said he had always intended it for W. V. H. when he brought it back from Athens last year and sends it now as an atonement for all the worry and anxiety he has caused to his colleagues for the last few days, which, however, he says are nothing to what his own sufferings have been.

W. V. H. went to see Rosebery at 2.30 on his way to the renewed meeting at Carlton Gardens. He did not return till 7.30, said he found Rosebery very cheerful, and had a long talk as if nothing had happened. He told Rosebery that if he had not joined us the Government would have been ridiculous—now that he had it was only impossible. . . . [H.]

In the task of constructing the Cabinet there were many other troubles, of which there are abundant glimpses in the Journal. There was a disagreement between Harcourt and Gladstone as to the proportion of high offices to be allocated to the House of Lords. On the evening of August 14 Harcourt wrote :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

45, BROOK STREET, *August 14, 8 p.m.*—I think it necessary to place on record the opinion which I expressed this afternoon that the proposed distribution of the principal offices in the Cabinet as between the House of Lords and the House of Commons is one which will not meet with the approval or support of the Liberal Party. More than half of what are considered the places of greatest emolument and dignity are assigned to the Peers. The significance of this constitution of the Cabinet is emphasized by the fact that one of the greatest spending departments is placed in the Lords. Tory

Governments in the last forty years have set a much better example in this matter than recent Liberal administrations. I entertain a profound conviction that this arrangement will give rise to great discontent in the House of Commons, and will probably prove fatal to the Government. Campbell-Bannerman, who came in at the end of the discussion, expressed strongly the same view which John Morley and I had placed before you, and I know it is shared by Arnold Morley and by Edward Marjoribanks, who in this matter, I doubt not, reflect the general opinion of the Liberal Members of the House of Commons. Until Rosebery's decision is announced I suppose this matter cannot be regarded as finally concluded. I greatly wish that, as on former occasions, you had had the opinion of Herschell on this matter and not alone that of the peers who have never sat in the House of Commons and who are not aware of the dangers of carrying the claims of the Lords to such extremities. . . .

. . . If this had been a matter which involved only the consideration of persons or places I would not have ventured to offer an opinion on a subject on which I have no right or desire to intervene. But as it carries with it what I cannot but regard as the recognition of undue claims of predominance for the House of Lords, which must have for the future serious bearing on the great struggles that lie before us, I feel that I cannot be silent or allow my convictions of coming disaster to remain in abeyance.

No former precedents can be of any avail in the presence of the increased and increasing strength of democratic sentiment in the Liberal Party and their indisposition to acquiesce in the paramount claims of the Peers. I feel that besides all the tremendous difficulties which you have to face and the powerful opposition you will have to encounter you will add the greatest of all discouragements, that of a dissatisfied party.

Gladstone's reply is not preserved, but its nature is indicated in the Journal:

"Gladstone takes the view that we are so weak in the House of Lords that it is necessary to strengthen ourselves there by the importance of the offices of those men who are with us. W. V. H. says, 'You might as well try to strengthen the ocean by pouring into it a *petit verre* of cognac,' and that above all things we want to be strengthened on the Front Bench in the House of Commons." On the proposal that Sir George Trevelyan should be Minister of Agriculture, "W. V. H. said, 'Why, he doesn't know the difference between a horse and a cow,' to which Gladstone replied, 'But



perhaps he might learn that.' " About one man there was remarkable unanimity. " It was agreed at Spencer's that the only man apparently fitted for every office was Campbell-Bannerman." [H.]

In the midst of all this turmoil, the figure of Gladstone moves with singular forbearance and wisdom. " I am the man who has to do all the butchering," he says, rather pathetically, referring to the exclusions and disappointments he has to cause. On the constitution of the Cabinet and the question of programme he is urbane and tolerant. He is sensible of the difficulties, but " is not difficulty the nurse of manhood ? " he writes to Harcourt. In discussing programmes, he says (July 18) he does so because " there have often been Governments, even long-lived Governments, with small majorities." " All this," he says, " seems to be written on the assumption that I am doomed to be the head. But before going into what would follow I shall hope to talk to you freely and familiarly on the smallness of the resources I have to place at the command of a new Government, while undoubtedly the 'country' will ascribe to me a considerable share."

#### IV

Meanwhile Parliament had met. There had been an intention on the part of the Government not to present a Queen's Speech; but the intervention of Harcourt, supported by Gladstone, resulted in the constitutional practice being followed. Mr. Asquith was selected to move an amendment to the Address, declaring that the Government did not possess the confidence of the House and the country, and the amendment being carried by 350 to 310, the Salisbury administration went out of office, the court circular announcing the fact in what were regarded at the time as unprecedented terms: " Lord Salisbury tendered his resignation, which Her Majesty accepted with great regret." On August 18 the new Cabinet went to Osborne to kiss hands. In the course of a minute record of the evening, the Journal says :

. . . Crossing to Cowes from Portsmouth our ministers passed the steamer returning with the ex-ministers, our men took off their hats to them and Cadogan waved his in reply.

H. Ponsonby was very civil and agreeable, and they were hustled into the dining-room to feed at once. After luncheon the old privy councillors were marshalled into the drawing-room, where they stood in a long row opposite the Queen, who was sitting with Connaught and Lorne on each side of her at a round table on which were the seals. When they were all there and ready to begin it was discovered that Kimberley (Lord President), and Charles Peel, Clerk of the Council, were absent, and they could not be found for fully five minutes, the whole of which time the line of new ministers stood facing the Queen in absolute silence. W. V. H. said he never saw people so uncomfortable.

The new privy councillors were then brought in and knelt round the table and had the oath administered—the others then singly knelt and kissed hands and received the seals without a word being spoken to any of them. After the Council was over Rosebery, Spencer and W. V. H. were told that they were to have audiences. W. V. H. asked Ponsonby what the Queen was going to say. He replied, "She wants to know who will communicate with her and tell her what is going on, as, of course, Gladstone cannot do so and wants to know if you will do it." W. V. H. said this was very awkward and he should not know what to say, as he could not possibly undertake this except at the wish of Gladstone and by his request. When he went in to have his audience the Queen said, "How do you do, Sir William, I hope you are well?" W. V. H. replied he was, and added, "I hope, Madam, you will feel that our desire is to make matters as easy and as little troublesome to you as we can possibly do." She bowed, but said nothing and then asked, "How is Lady Harcourt? Terrible weather is it not? and so oppressive." And that was all! [H.]

A few days later Harcourt was at Osborne again, when the atmosphere was warmer. "The visit to Osborne was pleasant," he writes to Lewis Harcourt (August 31). "H. M. is very gracious to me and seemed pleased with the young Home Secretary [Mr. Asquith]. She told me I had grown very like the Archbishop."

In the midst of this hurry of events, Harcourt was called on to go to Derby, where his re-election, on his acceptance of the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, was challenged by a factious opposition. The result of the election was the return of Harcourt by a majority of 4,900.

This event over, and the new Government being at last

complete, Harcourt left for Wiesbaden to consult the oculist whom he had visited in previous years. The question of his eyesight had been the subject of repeated discussions in the Press, and of recurrent concern to his colleagues. Writing to him a few weeks earlier, Gladstone said :

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN, *July 22.*—Forgive my taking a great liberty. Since my incident at Chester I have often thought sympathetically of you because I had heard that you were in some way menaced as to vision. Now though mine is a slight affair to all appearance and may be altogether temporary, I have at once of course under advice taken rigorous care : have renounced reading newspapers and almost all letters, and have reduced my dearly beloved reading of books virtually to zero. But I am under the impression that you work your sight relentlessly : and I also recollect or seem to recollect your doctrines about medical advisers, and I cannot help feeling some misgiving lest you should be running unnecessary or aggravating necessary risks, and doing yourself less than justice.

I may in all this be as visionary as I am intrusive, but I know you will forgive it. The singular depth and force, with which you always feel for others, cannot but a little incline others a little to feel about you, and may have the incidental disadvantage of their manifesting a right sentiment in a wrong way.

I find writing much less injurious than reading, and I do it a good deal in spectacles somewhat darkened. I hope it will cause some reform in my handwriting and thereby benefit my friends.

From Wiesbaden, on September 7, Harcourt gave Gladstone a cheerful account of his interview with the oculist (Pagenstecher), who found him better in all respects than when he first saw him, "pronounces the right eye perfect, and is confident it is not likely to suffer from the disease which affected the left eye."

## CHAPTER XI

### STRUGGLE OVER UGANDA

Leadership of the Party—The Chartered Company and Uganda—Harcourt against the annexationists—Lord Rosebery's fear of a second Khartum—Gladstone between two fires—A compromise with Lord Rosebery—A dragon at the Treasury—Buckingham Palace drains—Skirmishes with the departments.

**T**HE new Government, the last over which Gladstone was to preside, entered office under cheerless omens. There was a majority, but it depended entirely on the Irish vote. In England and Scotland the verdict of the polls had been indecisive, and it was notorious that the measure of the Liberal success had been due less to the advocacy of Home Rule for Ireland than to the emphasis that had been laid on the proposals for domestic reform put forward in the Newcastle programme. In such circumstances nothing but a stormy and unprosperous voyage could be anticipated. The cause which had alone kept Gladstone in public life had passed under eclipse, and all that could be looked for was a vain reaffirmation of the policy to which he had consecrated the later years of his life, prior to his final retreat to the peace of Hawarden. The fate of the Government that he had formed with so much difficulty must soon pass into the control of other hands, and the question of the leadership of the Liberal Party, which had been so long a theme of discussion in the Press, would assume an urgent aspect. The new Cabinet introduced one commanding figure to high office in the person of Mr. Asquith, who went to the Home Office, and brought others—Campbell-Bannerman, Bryce and Fowler—into more prominence in the affairs of the Party. But

the succession to the leadership seemed to rest with Harcourt, who had long been, next to Gladstone himself, the most able parliamentarian on the Liberal side in the House of Commons, and had been the leader of the Opposition in the absence of his chief. But though his claim to be regarded as the natural successor to Gladstone was indisputable, the feeling in his favour was by no means unanimous. He commanded in an increasing measure the confidence of the Radicals, for though it may be doubted whether he was ever a Radical in temperament in the sense that Chamberlain had been a Radical, he had advanced intellectually to conclusions that made him more acceptable to Radical opinion than any other leader of the Party. The objections to him were less on account of his opinions than on account of his temper, which time did not subdue and which often made him trying to colleagues. In the House of Commons, however, he had no real competitor for the leadership whenever it should fall vacant, and, though Spencer and Lord Rosebery were in other respects possible leaders, the Liberal objection to the head of the Government being in the House of Lords was so strong that it was held to exclude them from the choice. It was, therefore, with the apparent certainty of the reversion of the premiership, that Harcourt took office for the second time as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

He found himself at once in sharp conflict with Lord Rosebery on a question which threatened to imperil the new Government before it had well been launched. Among the legacies left by the late Ministry to their successors was that of deciding the future of Uganda. This subject was a part of much larger questions which were beginning to assume ominous proportions in the field of external politics. During the previous twenty years "the dark Continent" had been penetrated by the adventurers and distributed into spheres of influence by the statesmen, and in its development the aspirations of those countries which looked for "a place in the sun" were chiefly centred. Here, as in so many other fields of adventure, Great Britain

had had a formidable start, and North and South the keys, of the Continent were in her keeping. At the Cape the bold and imaginative genius of Cecil Rhodes was beginning to dream dreams which were soon to take shape and substance, and at the mouth of the Nile this country was still in that indeterminate position which the withdrawal of France and the events that followed upon it had dictated. Between these two spheres of British influence, though far removed from both, lay the territory of Uganda. Alike in geographical situation and in climate, its significance was great. Whoever controlled it, controlled the sources of the Nile, and its situation on the northern shores of the great lake of Victoria Nyanza and on the path of any practicable route from the North to the South made it of especial importance in connection with the future of the whole Continent. As early as 1875 Gordon had been sent there as envoy, and two years later Emin Pasha had visited the district, but it was Stanley who was really responsible for the opening up of the country. It was his report of the people and the conditions there that first attracted missionaries, French Catholics and English Protestants, to Uganda. The results were not wholly happy. There were dissensions between the Mohammedans and the Christians and between the Christian Catholics and the Christian Protestants. Mwanga, the tyrant of Uganda, was driven into exile, but was reinstated in 1889 by allying himself with the Christians, and in the November of that year the approach of a caravan under two officers of the British East Africa Company gave new confidence to the Christians, who accepted a British flag, and were taken to have acquiesced in British protection.

Meanwhile Dr. Peters was advancing towards Uganda in charge of a German expedition also sent nominally to the aid of the Christians. He arrived in February 1890, and succeeded in securing a treaty from Mwanga which the German Government afterwards disavowed and which Mwanga promptly forgot. Later in the year the British East Africa Company sent an expedition under Captain

Lugard to strengthen their hold on the country. Lugard found the two Christian factions still bitterly hostile, with Mwanga inclined to support the French Catholics. He induced him, however, to assent to a protectorate of the Company in a treaty signed on December 24, 1890. Lugard's character inspired confidence, and produced some measure of peace between the Christian factions. He erected a fort at Kampalla near the king's palace, and when war followed between Mwanga and Kabrega, king of the adjoining territory of Unyoro, who had given refuge to the now exiled Mohammedans, he aided Mwanga to defeat his rival. The position thus consolidated, Lugard went South-west to open up the country and establish trading stations, and with the help of the remnant of Sudanese soldiers left behind by Emin Pasha, built a fort on Lake Albert Edward and another at the foot of Ruwenzori. When he returned Uganda was in civil war, Mwanga having been driven to the islands with his Catholic friends. Lugard drove the "enemy" from the islands, brought Mwanga back, assigned the country of Buddu to the Catholics, forbade propaganda, declared freedom for all three religions, and seemed to have completed the pacification of the country when he received orders from the Company that the protectorate was to be abandoned and that his forces were to be withdrawn.

This was the position when the new Government came into office. The Company were in financial difficulties, and could not afford the cost of continuing the enterprise. The Salisbury Government had shown no inclination to back the Company or to take over the responsibility. Salisbury himself, in a despatch on August 25, 1891, had regretted the proposed withdrawal of the Company, but made no suggestion except that Mwanga should be given £1,000 a year on condition that he observed the treaty with Lugard and behaved well towards all Christians. This reserve was due in part, no doubt, to the general European situation and the desire to avoid any provocative action. Feeling was still feverish in regard to the Triple Alliance,

and French opinion viewed with suspicion the attitude of this country towards Germany and the continuance of our occupation of Egypt. France was herself entertaining dreams of expansion in Central Africa, had an expedition of her own in the vicinity of Uganda, and had no desire to see England strengthen her position in Egypt by establishing an unchallenged control of the head waters of the Nile. In these circumstances Salisbury made no move towards annexation, and, though the Company secured money which enabled them to delay the withdrawal of Lugard, it was only a respite, and when new instructions were sent to him to evacuate the country by December 1892, the Government still gave no hint of assistance. The only action of Salisbury indeed was to forbid Lugard to arm the loyal natives carrying out the evacuation, on the ground that this would be a contravention of the Brussels Act of 1884.

But with the change of Government there was a revival in powerful quarters of the agitation for preventing the evacuation, and in the middle of September Harcourt took violent alarm at the attitude of the Foreign Office on the subject. He had in the previous year been chiefly instrumental in Parliament in defeating the provision for the survey in connection with the proposed railway from Mombasa to Uganda, and though the grant had since been made his hostility to any extension of our commitments in Central Africa remained. It was all the stronger because he regarded the evacuation of Egypt as an honourable undertaking to which we were committed, and viewed with disfavour any action which could give the world the impression that so far from fulfilling that undertaking we were engaged in strengthening our grip upon Egypt. Writing to Gladstone, he said :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

TREASURY CHAMBERS, September 20, 1892.—I am very much exercised in my mind at the news from East Africa and Mombasa. As you will have observed the East African Company have "thrown up the sponge" (being as I imagine insolvent), and a determined



effort is being made to force the British Government to take to the *damnosa hereditas*. Rosebery has circulated a Memo. (for our consideration but not expressing his own sentiments), by Sir P. Anderson (of the F. O.), in the highest jingo tune advocating the annexation of the whole country up to the Albert Lakes with a view to the "reconquest" of the Sudan via the Upper Nile.

Sir G. Portal telegraphs on September 15 saying that as the evacuation by the Company is to take place in December we must send up "runners" at once to take possession ourselves. Captain Lugard threatens all sorts of horrors if we do not occupy at once. Bishop Tucker swears he will remain at his post and die—in short every sort of bogey is invoked to involve us in this horrible quagmire, which will be as bad as Khartum.

Captain Lugard declares that as "an officer holding H.M.'s commission he has pledged his own honour and that of the British nation to remain there for ever." And in order to facilitate the process he has just annexed two other provinces larger than Uganda, and has provided for the "honour of the British Nation" by garrisoning them with a few thousands of Sudanese ruffians—the refuse of Emin Pasha's force—whom he himself describes as "undisciplined freebooters."

The Company have ordered evacuation because "the occupation is so costly" and because the "territory yields no funds," *ergo* the British Government are to undertake it! But, even if we are capable of such a folly, how is it to be done?

It takes three months to march from the coast to Uganda; are we to send British troops up there and establish a regular administration? There is not time, even if we wished it, to get there before the evacuation by the Company, and when there we should have no means of communicating with the occupying force. The railway is *projected* but not *built*, and I hope never will be. If we embark in this desperate business we shall have no end of trouble with the French and Germans, as indeed we already have.

*Cui bono?* Is it *trade*? There is no traffic. Is it *religion*? The Catholics and Protestants (as they call themselves) are occupied in nothing but cutting each other's throats, with their bishops at their head. Is it *slavery*? There is no evidence that there is any slave trade question in this region. But this is plain that there is no labour to be got for railroad or any other purpose except slave labour.

I see nothing but endless expense, trouble and disaster in prospect if we allow ourselves to *drift* into any sort of responsibility for this business, and devoutly hope we shall have nothing to do with it.

The Company have made this terrible mess, and they must bear the responsibility. As Sir P. Anderson points out in his memorandum, Sir J. Kirk and those who knew what they were doing depre-

cated going to Uganda at all, but advised to advance gradually from the coast.

I have no doubt the Company are raising all sorts of alarms in order to blackmail the Government, and to compel us to entreat them to remain, in which case they would demand a subsidy.

I am sending round some notes on Anderson's mem. in a cabinet box, but I wrote to you direct as the matter seems very urgent, and nothing will be more dangerous than *half measures*.

During the next few days Harcourt's pen was busy in drawing up memoranda for the Cabinet against annexation, and in writing to his colleagues to inflame them with his own indignation at the proposal. "I will die a thousand deaths rather than have anything to do with it," he wrote to Mr. Morley, who was in Dublin. "I have saved the situation as regards the Uganda annexation," he wrote to Lewis Harcourt (September 23). "I have a letter from Mr. G. this morning showing he is all on our side, but saying he had abstained from writing till he knew my own views. I have letters of dismay from J. Morley, Lefevre and Asquith. The two last insist on a Cabinet, and I have written to Mr. G. supporting this demand." With Lord Rosebery meanwhile he was engaged in fervid correspondence. One letter will serve to indicate the sharp difference of view between them :

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

MALWOOD, *September 23, 1892.*—I owe you most sincere thanks for your very kind and amiable letter. You may be sure that it is with great reluctance that I differ from you upon any question, still more on one of such far-reaching importance as that of Uganda.

The first difficulty I feel is that we are absolutely without adequate information on a matter on which we are called on for instant decision. One of the most material points on which we know nothing is the view of the late Government on this subject. I should wish very much to know what they did or intended to do when it was made known to them that the African Company intended to evacuate Uganda. The first order of evacuation (afterwards suspended) must have been more than a year ago (I should be glad to have the exact date). The order was a second time given. Surely some papers between the late Government and the Company must exist on this subject. Or did the late Government anticipate no evils from evacuation? Not a paper has been presented to

Parliament as between the Government and the Company except, I think, on the subject of the railway. The first thing I think we ought to have is a print of *all* that has passed between the late Government and the Company since its Charter. This we ought to be in possession of before we can decide how to deal with the Company or with Uganda under present circumstances.

My next difficulty is that you do not give us an inkling of your own idea as to what we are to do or how we are to do it. You wish us to decide the general proposition that evacuation is to be prevented without knowing at all how or by what means. I think the two questions are absolutely dependent and cannot be considered apart from one another.

You bar British soldiers, but it is plain a *large force* of some sort will be necessary even to hold Uganda and keep up a line of communication for 800 miles to the coast and to cope with all the internal differences and the threatened enemies, Mohammedans, Mahdists, etc., outside. If Uganda is to be held by the British Government it must be in a very different fashion from that in which it has been held by the Company, with no communication or knowledge of what is going on there for a twelvemonth.

If the views of Sir Percy Anderson and Captain Lugard are to be acted on (as they surely will be before long), if we occupy not only Uganda, but Ankole, Toru, Unyoro, the Albert Lakes and the sources of the Nile, meaning Equatoria, the price must be an immense one. Are these to be Indian troops? If so there are grave objections to that. Or are they to be the ruffian Sudanese of Emin whom Lugard has left—men who would be a greater curse to the country than any from which it at present suffers?

You ask if I don't "fear a great disaster." Frankly speaking I do not. I can quite see that it is the game of Lugard & Co. to play on our fears in order to force their policy upon us or induce us to give them a subsidy—the worst of all resources. But if there was it is not our fault. *Non hæc in fœdera veni.*

In Gordon's case *the Government* sent him to Khartum. (I.e. he was sent by Granville, Hartington and Dilke<sup>1</sup> who settled it in a quadrille at Waddesdon without consulting the Cabinet.) He was *our* plenipotentiary. Lugard had no authority to "pledge the authority of the British nation," as he impudently phrases it. There is one thing quite clear to me, that in nothing we decide or do shall we attribute any weight to Lugard's action or opinions, or entrust him with any authority. . . .

I think it a salutary lesson that the Stanley-Emin Relief expedition has opened the eyes of the British public a good deal to the import-

<sup>1</sup> Dilke has denied any knowledge of a "quadrille at Waddesdon." The matter was settled at a meeting at the War Office when Ministers interviewed Gordon.

ance of these philanthropic-missionary-civilizing pretenders. As long as you keep to simple missionaries attending to their own work or discoverers like Livingstone going unattended amongst the savages they are safe enough. But when you come to militant bishops that want (?) annual expeditions, plundering and robbing and killing right and left, it is quite a different thing. These national rivalries, "spheres of influence" and land grabbing are the cause of all the danger and disasters. If your argument of the danger to Bishop Tucker is good for anything it is good for this, that if any religious fanatic or any hare-brained *militaire* choose obstinately to place themselves in danger they have the power to commit the nation to untold sacrifices of blood and treasure and to permanent annexations which are most impolitic and dangerous. It seems to me we cannot take too early or too firm a stand against such an admission of unlimited liability for men who are not our servants.

The Company did not go to Uganda for the *beaux yeux* of the missionaries, nor for slave trade, nor for civilization. They went there, as Sir P. Anderson says, because their hands were forced by the Germans. It was from jealousy and "earth hunger" that they occupied a place which was of no value and which they cannot hold.

It is the same spirit which inspires the whole of P. Anderson's memorandum and the letters of Lugard. We are to effect the reconquest of Equatoria and occupy the Albert Lakes and the whole basin of the Upper Nile. Why? for fear of the French, the Germans and Belgians, etc., etc. This is Jingoism with a vengeance. We are to have a "*Wacht am Nile*," and our drum and fife band is to play

Sie sollen nicht ihn haben

Den freien Britischen Nile.

The Nile is to be a freehold from its source to its mouth, and Uganda is the point on which it turns. It is because I am deeply opposed to the policy of annexation and conquest and international rivalry that I view our committal to the first step with the greatest dread.

At all events it is not a path on which we can enter in a hurry or without the greatest circumspection, and I am sure the Cabinet will deliberate upon it with a full sense of all the grave consequences it involves, both now and later.

By this time the papers relating to the action of the Salisbury Government were in Gladstone's hands, and he wrote to Harcourt (September 23) that, after reading them, "there is no Uganda question, properly speaking, for decision. It has been settled by the Company and the late Government. . . . I enclose three letters which I have written to Rosebery to-day, besides two telegrams—and I am not yet at luncheon time." He tentatively

suggested to Harcourt that they might endorse Salisbury's suggestion of £1,000 a year to Mwanga if the Company could not find the money and acted prudently. "I admire," he wrote next day, "the penetration with which you detect and expose the true motives of the Jingoës for an Equatorial Empire. . . . What I have felt is a great anxiety to save Rosebery from the position in which he would find himself (as I think) when the Cabinet met. But he has pressed on so fast and so far that I have (reluctantly) suggested to him a Cabinet for Friday, 30th." "The last days have been horrible," wrote Gladstone to Harcourt (September 28) in a letter in the course of which he said: ". . . I am not willing at this moment sharply to close every door, lest we drive our friend to despair." The issue had become mainly a struggle between Harcourt and Lord Rosebery, with Gladstone strongly backing the former, but eager to avoid a breach with the latter. It was a critical situation that seemed to offer small hope of compromise. If Lord Rosebery wished to remain in Uganda without sufficient information, he felt that Harcourt and those who were with him wished to evacuate without sufficient information. He was impressed by the strategic importance of Uganda especially in view of the designs of other Powers, by the dangers of civil war between the Christian parties, and by the likelihood of a disaster for which he would be held responsible, though it was the result of a policy which was not his policy. In writing to him Harcourt passed to the larger issues at stake :

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

MALWOOD, *September 27*.— . . . What seems to me to be at issue is a whole policy. Are we to attempt to create another India in Africa? The next goal on which the annexationists are bent is fully revealed in the communication of Major Wingate of April 24 (Mem. on the effect on Egypt on the withdrawal from Uganda), a most significant document. It is my conviction that we have already as much Empire as the nation can carry. If you give the heart too much work to do by extending the limbs and the frame beyond measure you enfeeble its action, and it succumbs. It is said, "We have India and Canada and Australia, why not Africa?"

That is like a landowner who, having secured many great estates which he can with difficulty manage, thinks it an argument for buying more and mortgaging those which he has for the purchases. That can only end in bankruptcy. I am amused at the people who call themselves Imperialists. I always remember the first pages in Gibbon on the "moderation of Augustus," in which he shows how for the first two centuries of the greatest and wisest Empire that ever existed the cardinal principle was the non-extension of the Empire, and whenever it was departed from they came to grief. I hear we meet Monday, and I am sure we shall do our best to agree as far as we can. . . .

Fortunately the rupture that seemed imminent was avoided by an expedient which postponed the evacuation for three months. Writing to his son from Balmoral, where he had now gone as Minister in attendance, Harcourt said :

BALMORAL CASTLE, *October 3*.— . . . The Uganda Cabinets were a ticklish business. I saw Mr. G. on the Wednesday as soon as he arrived in London, found him wonderfully fresh and very firm in his determination on Uganda. Rosebery reported equally firm on the other side. It seemed almost certain that when we met on Thursday there would be a breach—but I devised the three months' compromise, and suggested it as soon as the Cabinet met. We then adjourned in order that Herschell and I might settle terms with R. We went to the F. O. R. requested me to state my view and took it down from my lips, he writing it out. He then accepted it without demur in the form in which you have seen it in the papers, and Cabinet met Friday morning only to ratify what we had done. So far so good for *the present*. . . .

He had gone to Balmoral with some trepidation, for he expected to find the Queen unfriendly on the subject of Uganda and Ireland. But he was agreeably disappointed, as extracts from his letters from Balmoral to Lady Harcourt show :

. . . I had a little talk with H.M. after dinner. She was kind and cordial, but only *la pluie et le beau temps*. After dinner we had a celebrated fiddler, which of course bored me much. . . .

. . . She talks no politics to me *as yet*. . . . However that may have to come. I told Ponsonby that I should say that I believed Ireland to be somewhere North of Uganda. . . .

. . . Yesterday our whole talk was of her dolls. She is much delighted at the notice taken of them, and says she was devoted to them till she was fourteen. . . .

. . . Having happily escaped up to this time *WE* are going to talk seriously to me about Uganda. Of course the tone of the whole entourage here is of the most vehement Jingeism. . . .

. . . I was interrupted this morning when I was writing to you by a summons to a "solemn palaver." It has however passed off very mildly and satisfactorily. When you are face to face with her she is always very courteous and kind, and I soon shunted the conversation on to domestic affairs and family gossip. . . .

Writing on his return to Malwood to Gladstone he said, "She [the Queen] has no missionary propensities—on the contrary she said she thought they were very troublesome people, and as Empress of India pronounced a warm eulogium on the Mohammedan religion." There was an agreeable exchange of compliments between the Queen and Harcourt after the Balmoral visit, the Queen presenting Harcourt with a fine engraving of his grandfather, the Archbishop, and Harcourt sending her in return an engraving of Richmond's drawing of the same prelate and a copy of the Harcourt Papers containing the royal correspondence.

Meanwhile the conflict over Uganda was being shelved. Harcourt had revived the proposals originally made by Salisbury, one of which was that the territory should be reconveyed to the Sultan of Zanzibar. "To my surprise and satisfaction," wrote Harcourt to Gladstone (October 20), "Rosebery embraces this idea very cordially, as you will see from the enclosed letter." But a fortnight later it was agreed to send a commissioner out to Uganda to advise on what course should be pursued, and with this arrangement the troublesome question was postponed for a season. But the incident was an ominous beginning for the new Government, and indicated a fundamental breach between Harcourt and Lord Rosebery on external policy which became increasingly difficult to bridge. Their personal relations, however, were still cordial, and in the midst of the quarrel we find Harcourt writing to Gladstone, apropos of the death of the Duke of Sutherland :

. . . There is one thing at least to the good—you have a *Garler for Rosebery*. You may remember what I said to you in London on that subject. It is more important than you may suppose. I hope

you will lose no time in intimating to him your views as to its destination. He has seen it so often go to others who have very inferior claims, and now we have no one left who has any claim at all.

Gladstone replied that he thought that at the moment it would not be a gracious thing to do, as it might be looked on as an attempt at conciliation ; but he changed his mind, offered the Garter to Lord Rosebery, and it was accepted.

The shadow of a still graver African problem that was to disturb the future appears momentarily in a passage in the *Journal* at this time :

*October 31.*—W. V. H. returned from Lord Rothschild's at Tring, having spent Sunday there with Cecil Rhodes and Randolph Churchill. Rhodes is quite ready to take over Uganda and work it as a province of the South African Company for £24,000 per annum, though the East African Company want £40,000 per annum to keep it on. He also wants to take over the administration (as part of the Cape) of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from H. Loch, who is spending £100,000 per annum of British money in it, while Rhodes would run it for £40,000 per annum. He says that in a few years the Transvaal will be so flooded with English at the mines that there will be a majority there for annexation to Cape Colony. He talks hopefully of his telegraph line going through the Cape to Cairo. W. V. H. is delighted with him, likes his hard sense and knowledge of affairs, and says even Jingoism is tolerable when it is done "on the cheap." [H.]

Harcourt changed his view of Rhodes's political aims later, and said of him "Mr. Rhodes is a reasonable man. He only wants two things—slavery and protection." But he always retained his personal liking for him, and in the present instance was entirely with him in favouring the amalgamation of Bechuanaland with the Cape, a subject on which he had a few heated words with Ripon, the Colonial Secretary. "Of course H. Loch does not like to part with his own little despotism, and desires to keep his own niggers for himself, but this ought not to influence us," he wrote to Ripon. And when Rhodes's proposal was rejected Harcourt wrote snappily to Ripon on the subject of the grant from the Treasury to Bechuanaland :

. . . In dealing with these Cape cels it is necessary to have sand on one's hands.



The only terms I have consented to or can consent to is that the *grant in aid is not to exceed £100,000. I will not go into any question of expenditure last year or any other year.*

Later events were to show that the control of Bechuanaland had more significance than Harcourt attributed to it. Rhodes's eagerness to take over the territory assumed a new character in the light of the Jameson Raid. It was on the frontier of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, then about to be transferred to the administration of the Chartered Company, that the troops for the invasion of the Transvaal were mobilized.

## II

It must be admitted that Harcourt did not always make it easy for his colleagues to entertain amiable feelings towards him. Like another famous knight he was easily led on one condition, that he had his own way. If he did not have his own way he gave his colleagues no rest, and his personal affection for them put no check upon the vehemence of his criticism.

There was no man in public life for whom he entertained warmer feelings than Spencer. He recognized the high and chivalrous qualities of that wise and unassuming statesman. He saw in him the perfect flower of a tradition that was passing away, and hasty as he was with his pen I find no allusion to him in his letters which is not couched in terms of respect and affection. But Spencer was now at the Admiralty, and every head of a spending department was the natural enemy of the stern guardian of the public purse. He had returned to the Treasury with all his old passion for economy, fortified by a determination to carry out far-reaching reforms in taxation. As early as July 21, before the new Parliament had met and while the Salisbury Government was still in office, the Journal indicates that he was preparing for his campaign :

E. Hamilton came to luncheon. W. V. H. told him to prepare for equalization of the death duties, graduated taxation, especially income-tax, a repeal of all Goschen's acts for special loans, they being paid off by suspending the sinking fund for one year. [H.]

But the revision of taxation was only one part of his task. He preserved the now forgotten tradition of Treasury control over expenditure, and entered on his conflicts with the spending departments with his usual delight in controversy on details. Replying to Spencer, who had sent him a return of "English ships matched with either Russian or French" (the German Navy had not then become a serious factor in the calculations of the experts), he said :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

11, DOWNING STREET, November 29, 1892.—I am much obliged for the comparative list of ships which, though it does not give the information I asked for, at least gives me the means of finding out for myself what I wanted to know.

The Admirals are up to their well-known "tricks and manners." In order to swell the list of foreign ships and to prove the inferiority of the British Navy they have stuck into the list about thirty foreign ships which are *not yet launched* and will not be for three or four years to come. I have marked these vessels in red on the list. The British ships on the other hand are all vessels already launched. . . . The table really proves what I have always affirmed that at this moment in armour-clads and first-class cruisers the British Navy is a match not only for any two Powers but for all the Powers of the world. If you look at my list of the eight unmatched iron-clads left over (after providing for all the French and Russian ships), you will not find it easy to discover their equivalents in the other navies of the world.

The Italians have some big ships, but most of the Germans are of a very secondary class.

I am quite willing of course to enter on the discussion of ships *building* as well as ships *built*. But the two questions must be kept separate. Let us first settle the question of our position in respect of ships actually built. . . .

The resources we have in an immense marine experience in steam navigation as compared with France and Russia and the other Powers is the most real foundation of our extraordinary superiority.

We can build when we please four ships to their one, and we can man ten ships to their one with mariners who understand the work, which theirs do not. No account is taken of the "eyes of the fleet," with which we are provided in the swift transatlantic steamers with which the mercantile marine is to provide us. I hope you will have these tables corrected so as to show the actual state of things in *ships launched*, and then, if you please, have a separate table of ships building on either side. This is the only reasonable way of dealing with the question.

I should very much like to debate the matter with you and your

admirals if you will come up any day this week. I dare not walk into the Admiralty *alone*; I should probably be *put in irons*. . . .

I send you my notes on your tables, which I wrote off in a hurry last night after studying them. I sat up till two in the morning, as to me this is a favourite pursuit which I have followed for many years, but never with such advantage in materials. I am really as great an advocate of British maritime supremacy as any jingo, for I regard it as the great security for our neutrality, but I like to know what the actual facts are and to confound the panic-mongers.

In this spirit he bombarded Spencer with demands for further returns, annotated them with industrious criticisms, entered into minute comparisons between class and class of ship and nation and nation, and indicated that he proposed to print the tables "for the Cabinet." The gentle Spencer mildly protested:

*Spencer to Harcourt.*

ADMIRALTY, December 5.—I am attending to both your letters.

(1) Will it not be a somewhat novel proceeding for the Chancellor of the Exchequer to circulate a paper as to ships? I can quite understand his replying to one which the First Lord may circulate, when the time approaches for the Cabinet to consider the naval estimates.

I certainly should propose to circulate information, and I hope I should not do it in a garbled way with all the old tricks which a friend of mine attributes to admirals who are my advisers. . . .

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

DEAR SPENCER,—*Peccavi*. You are right and I am wrong, and it is not for me, as the old Scotch woman said, to "take the word out of the Minister's mouth." Yours sincerely, W. V. Harcourt.

### III

The formidable bark of the watchdog at the Treasury penetrated all the offices in Whitehall alike. No department that had the audacity to spend money escaped the attentions of a man whose inexhaustible vitality kept half-a-dozen conflicts going concurrently with ease and enjoyment. He threw as much gusto into picking up pins in the Office of Works as he displayed in uprooting trees in Uganda, and even the drains of Buckingham Palace became the subject of a blast of comic fury, as when writing to E. W. Hamilton he says:

TREASURY CHAMBERS, *October 16, 1892*.—I return the collection of papers which record the sanitary wisdom of what Lefevre calls the joint policy of the Office of Works and the Treasury. It is very entertaining reading. I think the official correspondence between the Home Office, the Office of Works and the Treasury on the subject of my w.c. in the year 1880 is really a monument of departmental industry and sagacity. It would have enlarged even Dickens's ideas of the circumlocution office and the way not to do it.

The protracted correspondence on the subject of whether £120 should be spent on repairing a drain declared to be dangerous under H.M.'s apartments in Buckingham Palace is an admirable illustration of the practical working of a constitutional monarchy. I confess myself to be a little impatient of these pedantic absurdities.

However, I agree with you that there is little use in crying over spilt sewage, and what we have for the present to do is to conduct our business like our drainage on principles more conformable to common sense. I will therefore not enter into any more criticism of the past, but endeavour to put this matter, which is of real importance, on a sound footing.

I think the departmental enquiry suggested by Lefevre is the right thing, and I shall be glad to set it at work at once. You seem to regard the Office of Works as the whipping boy of the Treasury, and when you can cut down nothing else you stop up the drains. This is like the economy of great personages who, when they are obliged to reduce their expenditure, always begin by cutting off the charities.

From the drains at Buckingham Palace he turned to the misdemeanours of the Post Office, whither Arnold Morley had gone as Postmaster-General. He was indignant at the limitations then put upon Post Office savings in the interests of the bankers, and writing to Arnold Morley, said :

TREASURY CHAMBERS, *November 1*.— . . . I don't expect any good is coming out of that Nazareth of the Post Office and the obstructives by whom you are surrounded, but there is one thing which I wish you would consider which would be very useful, very popular and above all things cost the Exchequer nothing (rather profit it). I have always thought it a gross injustice to have placed so narrow a limit on the deposits in the P. O. Savings Bank as £30 a year and the investments in stock. This, as I happen to know from having to make investments of this kind for servants and people of this class, is a very real restriction on thrift. It is the only real way that many people have of putting by money at all. The restriction is really made for the benefit of the private bankers, and they are the bitter opponents of reform. If you choose to propose an extension of this, I am quite ready to fight the bankers. . . .

He was equally anxious to fight the Post Office itself on the question of colonial penny postage. "I have seen dear Henniker Heaton to-day," he wrote to Arnold Morley (November 16)! "He seems to me to have a great deal more sense than any of your Post Office people." He wanted to have figures showing the cost of an all-sea penny postage. "Don't allow yourself to be bullied by those 'permanents' who think a great deal more of fighting Henniker Heaton than of benefiting the human race." When the information duly came, he was filled with wrath at the official "Objections to Ocean Penny Postage." Writing to Arnold Morley (November 25), he said :

. . . I did not think it possible that any man who had passed an examination for the civil service would have written such unmitigated nonsense and feeble twaddle. What I have asked for over and over again are some facts and figures upon which an opinion can be founded, but this the Post Office either cannot or will not give, but maunder on with this wretched inconclusive stuff. . . .

His marginal comments on the "Objections" make breezy reading. Thus, "Because you have an express, therefore, you can't have a slow train. Oh! sagacious administration." "Nonsense." "Still greater nonsense." "What has that to do with it. If you can carry a card, you can carry a letter." And so on.

#### IV

His reappearance at the Treasury had coincided with the emergence into prominence of the question of bimetallism. At the request of the United States Government a Monetary Conference had been summoned to which the British Government was to send representatives. The question of bimetallism, a burning one at the time in America, became a subject of much controversy in England also. Harcourt, who believed that "a man who was not a mono-metallist was a mono-maniac," would have preferred to have had nothing to do with the Conference, but found himself committed to take part in it by the previous Government. "I had a short conversation with Goschen on the subject before he left the Treasury," he

wrote to Gladstone (August 28). "It is quite plain that he found himself between the devil and the deep sea, with Salisbury, Balfour and Chaplin as bimetallists on the one side, and his own mono-metallic convictions on the other, with a side glance at the influence of the Manchester cheap-money men at the election." The Americans wanted the Conference to be held in London, but Harcourt, like Goschen before him, declined on the ground that this would give the impression that this country favoured bimetallism. "In these days of contagion," he wrote to E. W. Hamilton, "I can't have London infected by an incursion of insane bimetallists. It would be too embarrassing to have to treat them as if they were *compos mentis*." In the end the Conference was held at Brussels in November, England being represented by C. Freemantle, Bertram Currie, Alfred Rothschild, and Sir Thomas Farrer, wit' one bimetallist, Sir William Houldsworth. "Good men and true (what Gladstone calls 'sane' men)," wrote Harcourt to Farrer. "With such a garrison I shall feel that the fort is safe." His own views on the currency question will be gathered from the correspondence which passed between him and Hucks-Gibbs at this time (Appendix III). The Brussels Conference, as he and Gladstone had expected and hoped, was entirely futile, ending in the passing of a pious resolution. When the subject was revived later (February 26, 1895) on a resolution supported by Mr. Henry Chaplin, Harcourt was charged with having rendered the Brussels Conference sterile. He gave conclusive evidence that the overwhelming opinion of the nations represented was hostile to the United States proposal, and pointed out that in all periods of agricultural distress there had been the same demand for the depreciation of the currency, but that the issue of paper money had not at any period improved the position of the poor. They knew perfectly well that when the price of wheat was five times what it now was agricultural wages were 50 per cent. lower.

## CHAPTER XII

### AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT

Sir L. N. Guillemard's Recollections of Harcourt at the Treasury—  
At Malwood—Memories of Official Life.

**B**EFORE turning to the final episode that led up to the crisis of Harcourt's public life, I venture to break the narrative and turn aside to take a look at the man at close quarters, as he appeared to those who worked with him, enjoyed his fun, came under his lash, and saw the cloud and the sunshine chasing each other across his brow. When he returned to the Treasury he had as one of his private secretaries Sir L. N. Guillemard, K.C.B., who has been good enough to place at my disposal his memories of his chief, which I append. He says :

" Looking back over my official life I think that the luckiest day in it was that on which I was appointed private secretary to Sir William Harcourt.

" I had just finished six years of service under Government, first in the Home Office, in those days a sleepy temple of dull routine, and later in the Treasury, where, though the atmosphere was more stimulating, the work of a junior was in those days somewhat pedestrian. My youthful ardour was waning, the ordinary clerical work was beginning to be rather dusty on the palate, and symptoms of boredom began occasionally to supervene. I hankered after a freer and a fuller life and, by good fortune, I got my chance.

" I confess frankly that I started my work as private secretary with some inward qualms. I knew that my chief did not suffer fools gladly, and I was afraid he might

find me by his standards a fool. I had heard disquieting accounts of an overbearing disposition and a violent temper. I need not have been afraid. From the first I found him the kindest of friends, the most stimulating and generous of chiefs, the most delightful of companions. After a few weeks I felt as if I had always known him. The years which I spent as his private secretary count amongst the happiest in my life: they were certainly some of the fullest. The work was absorbing and varied: one saw the inner working of Government and knew the secrets and the gossip of the Cabinet: one met all the most interesting people, and heard the best of talk. But the supreme interest to me was the personality of my chief.

"Intellectually dominant he was, and one realized that from the start: but it took a little time to realize what manner of man he was, not as an intellectual force, but as a human being—how strange a complex of the unexpected and the contradictory, compact of humanity and humour, with the tenderness of a woman where he loved, with the heart of a boy, and the temper of a child, yes and often of a naughty child, perverse, unreasonable, petulant, mischievous.

"It was an ungoverned temper. I don't know whether he had ever tried to govern it, but if he had, it beat him. He was ever a fighter, reckless and self-confident, and it was part of his exuberant nature to rejoice in his own personality, failings and all, to let himself go and damn the consequences. I fancy he felt so sure of his real friends that as far as they were concerned he thought he could do what he liked, and that other people could go hang. Be this as it may, there is no doubt that his temper handicapped him through life, robbed him of the full reward of his abilities, made many enemies, lost him some good friends, and sorely tried many more.

"But his temper, as I knew it, though ungoverned, and often exasperating, was never 'nasty.' It may, if stories are true, have been different in his earlier life. I can only speak of the man as I knew him, and in the days when I



worked for him he had begun to mellow, and he mellowed fast.

"I worked with him day in and day out, for three years, in fair weather and foul, in success and failure. I was the victim of many explosions, but I never remember one that left me sore. It was worth while to suffer the dressing down for the apology which always followed, conveyed sometimes by the spoken word, more often by some friendly remark or the touch on one's shoulder of a large hand, but always with a humour that robbed it of all embarrassment. In a way both the explosions and the apologies brought him nearer, reduced the gulf between our ages and our capacities, and made me feel at home. Like the man who was described by his wife as 'more a friend than a husband,' he was more a friend than a chief.

"It is always difficult to analyse a complex personality and pick out the salient characteristics which constitute individuality, but I think that what struck me most was his versatility and many-sidedness. He would be by turns a scholar, bringing out of his treasure-house things new and old, a statesman reviewing problems in the light of cool logic and ordered reason, 'a first-rate fighting man' revelling in the dust and the sweat of the fray, and at times a great jolly boy.

"His vigour and vitality were extraordinary. They were to scale with his enormous frame. When he was in the vein his talk was burgundy to other people's claret: when he was well he made other people seem feeble and anæmic: when he was ill, he was ill with all his might, and resorted to Gargantuan remedies. It was rumoured in his family that he knew of one remedy only, blue pill, of which he was alleged to keep a cake and consume slices thereof in secret.

"His joy of living was phenomenal. Scholarship, literature, hard work, holidays, the strain of battle, the relaxation of repose, friendships, enmities, the beauty of nature, the charm of women, his own wit, other people's wit, good company, good food, good wine, good tobacco,

he savoured them all. At the banquet of life he was a mighty trencher-man, sure of his head and his stomach, shirking no course, mixing his liquors recklessly, with occasionally a quite audible smacking of the lips.

"As I write, many memories come back to me. Memories of Downing Street. Long days of work, full of interest and incident, days enlivened by pleasant society, brilliant talk, flashes of wit: days disturbed by constant explosions or illumined by genial calm. We were often harassed, often tired, but never, thank the Lord, dull.

"Memories of a visit to Cambridge, to our common Alma Mater, the result of a conspiracy, engineered by Montagu Butler, the Master, and Henry Jackson, best of Trinity men, the object of which was to compose an ancient feud.

"I had played a humble part in the plot, and I remember well how as I entered the Great Gate I felt like a nervous mahout in charge of an enormous animal of unlimited powers and uncertain disposition, for whose behaviour I should be held responsible. But all went well: the visit was a great success and to the accompaniment of toasts and mutual compliments the hatchet was cheerfully and even roisterously buried.

"Memories of Malwood, and these are best of all, for it was there he was at his best. It was there that he really enjoyed himself, loafing about the garden in summer, or in the winter solacing himself indoors with talk and books. It is there I like to remember him, in his study. It was always very warm (he loved a 'frowst'), and he blossomed in the warmth.

"I can see him now sitting by the fire, or padding about the room with his elephantine tread, from the table with its litter of open books to the book-shelves, perpetually lighting cigars and laying them down half-smoked in unsuitable spots.

"And all the while he talked, better talk than I have ever heard, before or since. He had apparently read everything and forgotten nothing, and when the string of his

tongue was loosed, out it all came—literature, history, politics, anecdote, scandal, the whole flavoured with Attic salt and illustrated with Rabelaisian exuberance. He would pass from one to the other with an unexpectedness that left one breathless. In the middle of a talk of Sophocles or Cromwell, there would come a premonitory gurgle, and before you knew where you were he would be rolling his tongue over some ridiculous story, or some foible of a pompous contemporary: and before the chuckles which had convulsed his huge frame had died away, one would be back with Napoleon or Cobbett's *Rural Rides*.

“Feasts of reason? Those evenings were banquets of reason and unreason. The courses might sometimes overlap: they might even be served all together, as it were a haggis, ‘fine confused feeding,’ but there was no indigestion in it, and one rose from table ‘asking for more.’

“Memories of official life.—One day a certain man came to lunch. He was clever and amusing with a good conceit of himself, and, responding to the stimulus of good company, he began to talk more and more freely. As ill luck would have it, he brought up the subject of American wives, on whose characteristics he touched humorously. It was a somewhat delicate topic, in view of the nationality of his hostess, of which he was evidently unaware, and the conversation was adroitly turned. Was it allowed to continue in safe channels? I trow not. The devil of mischief was awake in Sir William, and with a deft touch he switched the talk back again. Then the fun began. Not once but again and again was the unfortunate man pushed by kindly hands off the forbidden ground, only to be met and gently led back again. It was no good trying to save him. Flattered by his host's evident interest in his talk and sympathy with his views, he finally went off the deep end and splashed about.

“It was one of the funniest scenes I have ever witnessed. Symptoms of hysteria began to manifest ‘themselves first in the hostess and then in the rest of the party. The host alone remained calm, Grandisonian, and encouraging.

Unconscious of his indiscretion, the little victim played to the last, and left well pleased with himself, leaving behind him a company exhausted with varied emotions.

"An inveterate smoker, Sir William smoked cigars all day long, or rather he half- or quarter-smoked them, and then left them anywhere and forgot them, in arm-chairs or drawers or Cabinet boxes, or in his pocket, or under his pillow in bed. He kept his cigars for choice loose in his pockets, and produced them at most unsuitable times, for, if the desire to smoke came upon him, the steps to gratify the longing were apparently automatic and unconscious.

"I remember one awful moment. It was the annual selection of sheriffs, and he sat on high as President of the Court, robed like Solomon in all his glory. Suddenly he was seen to begin an exploration of his pockets with every indication of a set purpose. 'Good Lord,' said Loulou, clutching my arm, 'he can't be going to smoke.' 'If he finds a cigar,' I replied, 'he will undoubtedly put it in his mouth; but the worst may not happen. Let us hope he has no matches.'<sup>1</sup> Apparently he had none, for the crisis passed, and the Bench remained unprovoked.

"Private secretaries, that patient and meritorious race whom Disraeli described as 'the gentlemen who are kind enough to assist me in the discharge of my public duties,' are sometimes accused by common persons who know no better of taking too much upon themselves. Be that as it may, nothing annoys a self-respecting private secretary so much as when his chief, by an unauthorized act of independent volition, gets hold of a paper which he is never intended to know about at all, or gets hold too soon of a paper which he will at a suitable time be allowed to see. Every good nurse who takes a pride in her charge knows that blacking, though useful in the house, is not a safe food;

<sup>1</sup>He never carried any matches. And he never smoked cigarettes. One day he was out of cigars, and his son offered him a cigarette: he declined, saying, "No thanks, my dear boy, I have no petty vices."

batter pudding on the other hand, while nourishing, should be consumed not at breakfast but at dinner.

"It may have been some suspicion of this maternal solicitude on the part of his staff which prompted my chief occasionally furtively to enter our room when untenanted, select a file at random and carry it off as a dog conveys a bone. He might then, if he had nothing else to do (or indeed equally if he had other work which ought to be done), with his own hand write and despatch privily a letter which undid weeks of patient spade work by his prudent assistants. At other times if the subject interested him he would let himself go and give his fancy free play.

"I remember one case, where a new junior had to be selected for the Treasury. The file contained a record of the subjects of examination and the marks obtained by each man, and it came back with a long discourse on education as a test of ability, which concluded with words to this effect: 'I see that Mr. Blank obtained high marks for history, which is good, and none at all for political economy, which is even more creditable. So promising a public servant must not be lost to the Treasury.' I cannot now remember whether Mr. Blank was appointed or not.

"In connection with a certain matter, action had been taken by a solicitor to the Office of Woods which aroused the fury of my chief. 'Tell Cuffe,' he said, 'to come over at once.' I tried to explain that Cuffe (now Lord Desart) was solicitor not to the Office of Woods but to the Office of Works, but he refused to listen. 'Send for him at once. Will nobody ever obey me when I give directions?' I telephoned to Cuffe, who was luckily a person of considerable humour, and explained the position. On his arrival he was received with a torrent of reproach and censure, which lasted perhaps a quarter of an hour. The open and notorious incompetence of himself and his department was dealt with at length, and the enormity of his present action illustrated with a wealth of historical knowledge bearing on the causes of the fate which overtook Charles

the First when he endeavoured to ride rough-shod over the liberties of a free people. Cuffe sat perfectly unmoved and said nothing, until Sir William paused for lack of breath, and asked him whether he had any possible excuse to offer. 'Only this,' replied Cuffe. 'All you've been saying may be quite true, but it has no more to do with me than with the babe unborn. It isn't my department, and I don't know what you are talking about.'

"Instantly the flood of talk was turned upon me. 'Why was this not explained to me; why have I been allowed to waste my time like this?' 'I tried to tell you, sir,' I replied, 'for five minutes, but you would not listen'; and at this, the humour of the situation began to dawn upon him, and finally overcame him. 'There appears,' he said, 'to have been some misunderstanding, the blame for which I do not think it will at this moment be necessary or indeed profitable to apportion. Let us all go in to lunch. If Mr. Cuffe has no other engagement, I hope he will honour us with his company.' After lunch I asked him whether he would like me to send over for the real offender. 'I think not,' he said. 'It is never wise to overdo things, and I do not really think I could do it all over again. After all, roughly speaking, justice has been done.'

"One day, as I was sitting at work, he came into my room holding a paper in his hand. 'My young friend,' he said, 'I would invite your special attention to this document. It is of an unusual nature. You will observe that, contrary to my habit, I have written it out in full myself. You will also observe that it is in the form of a letter which will be signed by yourself. You ask me what is the reason for this unusual procedure. It is a perfectly fair question, and I will give you a straightforward answer. My reason for the course I have adopted is that I am not sure whether the terms of the letter will commend themselves to the recipient. In fact I rather anticipate an aggrieved rejoinder. In that event, we will revert to our normal methods. You will draft a letter for my signature explaining that the first letter was incorrect and unauthorized, and I will sign it,

thus obtaining credit for rectifying the errors of my staff. It is by these small amenities,' he concluded as he left the room, 'that the wheels of official business are greased, that honour is given where due, and the value of discipline impressed upon the young.'

"I remember that quite in my early days, I was given a bit of work to do that was important and had to be done in a hurry. I sat up most of the night and, though I say it who should not, did it very well. The next morning I came into his room feeling rather like a retriever who has accomplished a particularly difficult find, tired but happy, and expecting to have my head patted. Directly I got past the door I saw that the storm-cone was hoisted. We began going through the papers, and at last came to the memorandum at which I had worked so hard. He took it up, and read bits of it. Then followed a series of the internal noises which I had learnt to associate with disapproval, and at last he tossed the paper at me saying, 'a very slovenly piece of work; you cannot have taken any trouble about it.' I suppose I was tired and I know I was bitterly disappointed, and, as in the case of the Psalmist, 'my heart was hot within me, and at last I spake with my tongue,' dwelling in heated and voluble language on the trouble I had taken and the unfairness of his treatment. Suddenly I realized to my horror that I was actually scolding my chief—this terrible man of whose temper I had heard so much. The fountain of my eloquence was dried up, and I stole a look at him expecting to be dismissed on the spot. And what did I see—a sort of benevolent uncle with shaking chins (a sure sign of fair weather) and amused eyes. 'Never lose your temper, my young friend,' he said, 'you will no doubt have observed that I never lose mine. When you are in a calmer mood you shall explain your memorandum to me. It may not be so bad after all. Meantime let us pass to the other orders of the day.'

"One day the bell rang violently, and he was found, sitting at his table, ominously calm.

"The table was of ample dimensions, and furnished with

stationery on the lavish scale reserved for cabinet ministers. On it was a massive double inkstand, loaded in both barrels and a varied assortment of pens. As for paper there was within easy reach a hutch, six-rabbit size, stocked with paper, note paper, letter paper, octavo, quarto, foolscap, with envelopes to match, sufficient to stock a fair-sized shop. 'I have,' he remarked sadly, 'no pens, ink or paper. How can I do my work?' The phrase became a household word, and ever after when the weather looked threatening, one irreverent private secretary would ask of another: 'Anything really wrong, or is it a shortage of pens, ink and paper?' •

"From time to time he would take a dislike to a paper or a letter, and refuse to deal with the one or answer the other. On such occasions the orthodox routine of the staff was to take no notice, treat him like a trout which has been 'put down,' wait a day or so and then, keeping well out of sight, put the fly over him again well cocked. Occasionally, if he was feeding freely, he took it with a rush, and all was well. More often he rose short, or took no notice, and the fisherman retired baffled, to try again another day.

"If he really made up his mind not to deal with a paper, it became a forlorn hope. Direct appeals fell on deaf ears; artifice failed dismally; he seldom gave himself away, but he remained undefeated. If worried by the too frequent appearance of the document he would hide it behind a bookcase or elsewhere, and if asked for its whereabouts allude to bad staff work—'I keep secretaries to find papers, not to lose them.'

"I remember one letter from a tiresome but influential supporter of the party in the country whom he loathed. The man wrote rather a nice letter, making an eminently reasonable request. It was clearly a thing to be agreed to, and the letter was accordingly given him in the ordinary course of business with a suitable reply. Would he sign it? Never. The beastly thing was put on his table in the morning, sent to him at the House of Commons,



forwarded to him in the country. It came back as it went, or, worse still, did not come back at all. Letters from the prominent supporter became numerous and decreasingly courteous. The thing became a nightmare, and at last the head Whip called in despair and made an urgent appeal.

“ ‘My dear Ellis,’ he said, ‘this sort of thing is getting intolerable. I must change my staff. From our good friend Salteena, did you say, twelve letters, and no answer? Inexcusable.’ ‘I think, sir,’ I interposed, ‘you have seen the file more than once.’ ‘Impossible,’ he replied, ‘bring it to me directly.’ I brought it, and, after a glance at it, he resumed, ‘Draft a letter for my signature, and begin with these words: “Your request is most reasonable and I hasten to agree to it. I regret that, owing to the remissness of my private secretary, the matter was not brought to my notice earlier.” See that I sign it to-day.’ Then, after the Whip had gone, ‘This, my friend, will teach you not to try and make me do what I don’t want.’

“After I ceased to work for him, daily intercourse ended, but I still saw him constantly, first in the years when, though freed from the cares of office, he still stayed in the fighting line, and later when, in the evening of his days, he had finally put off his armour; and it was pleasant to watch how, as the summers passed over his head, and as peace gradually ‘gat hold’ of him he mellowed.

“The antagonisms and enmities, heritage of his fighting prime, died away, though not without a struggle. The old war horse was out at grass, peacefully enjoying the pasture and the repose, but to the last it was wise to look out for his heels. Those whom he loved (and he had a genius for affection) he loved more.

“To the end he kept his joy of life, and notably his understanding of youth, and his sympathy with the young. He never grew old. ‘Whom the Gods love die young.’

“Of the Great Assize he will, I believe, have no fear. ‘*Capable de tout*,’ as his familiars described him, he will probably approach the judgment seat with a confident,

possibly with a swaggering gait. And with reason, for if the recording angel has any humanity and any sense of humour, '*si mentem mortalia tangunt*,' he will before closing the ledger marked W. V. H. have cancelled the debit side with the explanation (for the satisfaction of the celestial auditor-general) '*Quia multum amavit*.'

"Meantime may the dust lie lightly on him."

## CHAPTER XIII

### HOME RULE ONCE MORE

Cabinet Committee on Home Rule—Introduction of the Bill—Harcourt's objections on Finance—A scene in the House—An Egyptian crisis—Conflict over the Estimates—Local Option Bill—Bimetallism—Letter to the Queen on Radical measures—On parliamentary obstruction—The Siam affair.

THE Session of 1893 is memorable in parliamentary annals for more than one reason. It was the most prolonged in modern experience, continuing through the summer, the autumn and the winter until February 1894. It witnessed the last phase of the greatest parliamentary career of the nineteenth century, and one of the most heroic personal achievements in political history. Gladstone's genius never burned more brightly than during this session in which, now in his eighty-fourth year, he fought the longest and fiercest battle of his public life with a skill and passion that he himself had never surpassed and no one else in living memory had equalled. The story of this great episode does not belong to this book, for Harcourt, immersed in his Budget, in his own Bills, and in his conflicts with the departments, which will be dealt with subsequently, had only a subsidiary part in the struggle. Perhaps it was because of the multiplicity of his tasks and the demands made on him in the House, where, apart from Home Rule, he was charged with the burden of leadership that he was excluded from the committee which Gladstone selected during the winter to draw up the details of the Home Rule Bill. Perhaps there were other reasons for the exclusion. An entry in the *Journal* on November 17, 1892, throws an equivocal light on the matter :

... Spencer came this morning to see W. V. H., and after beating about the bush for some time said Gladstone wished to appoint a Committee of the Cabinet to draft the Home Rule Bill and "would W. V. H. mind not being on it?" W. V. H. said he was delighted to be excluded. Spencer very shy and nervous about the proposal, evidently did not know how it would be taken. All's well that ends well!

The Committee proposed is Gladstone, Spencer and John Morley, with Bryce as a specialist on constitutions. W. V. H. said that, though he had no desire to be on it himself, he must have some man there who would have some regard to the views of the English people on the question. He suggested Campbell-Bannerman. [H.]

Later on (January 6, 1893), Spencer pretty clearly indicates why Harcourt was excluded when, replying to a letter from Harcourt, he says, "Possibly i.e. [Gladstone] dreaded the well-known opposition which was sure to be given to the measure, in whatever shape it was produced, from the most prominent person in the Cabinet."

There is another glimpse of a not wholly harmonious Cabinet in a reference in the Journal to a Cabinet meeting four days later. "Rosebery and W. V. H. sat on a sofa behind and away from the others whilst the discussion was going on, though taking part in it. Their ostentatious position apart from the rest seemed to make J. Morley and Spencer nervous and uneasy. Spencer at one time came and sat down between them, but W. V. H. said, 'Go away, you have no right here, this is the *English* bench.'" The causes of friction arose in some measure from temperament, but still more from differences on principle. The question of Irish representation was still unsettled, and was the subject of much heated debate and correspondence. In the Bill as eventually laid before Parliament the "in-and-out" method was adopted, that is to say, eighty Irish members were to sit at Westminster, but they were not to vote on motions or bills referring only to Great Britain. This proved to be agreeable to no party, and in the end Gladstone and Mr. Morley conceded to the Liberal Unionist opposition the principle of the retention of the Irish members for all purposes.

But Irish representation was not the only subject of

disagreement in the Cabinet. The financial clauses of the Bill were the ground of much controversy in which Harcourt took an active part, propounding a scheme to Gladstone and then finding himself "bound in candour" to point out objections to it on the ground that under it the Irish contribution to the Imperial Exchequer "may dwindle away and in the end disappear." Writing to Mr. Morley on the same subject (January 18), he said :

. . . It has been pointed out to me that my financial scheme—admirable as it is in its simplicity—has a fatal defect, viz., that if your friends are once secured on a fixed payment which is adequate to all their wants they may reflect that it is not necessary to pay taxes at all. . . . What it proves is that the best plan which is possible is impossible—an observation which applies to a good deal else in the same connection. . . .

\* It was on this subject that the most serious breach in the relations of Harcourt and Mr. Morley occurred at the critical moment of the introduction of the Bill. On the morning of the day on which he was to move the first reading of the measure, Gladstone received the following letter :

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

11, DOWNING STREET, *February 12, 1893, 10 p.m.*—I am extremely sorry to trouble you at this supreme moment, but I have received notice this afternoon in a letter from J. Morley that the financial plan of the Home Rule Bill has been changed in most material particulars without my knowledge or any consultation with me.

As far as I can understand the change proposed in Morley's letter it is one to which I cannot assent, and against which indeed I feel bound formally to protest, as it is one I could not possibly defend.

The proposal as stated to me is that if the Excise is lowered the whole loss in Ireland is to be borne by the Imperial Exchequer, and if it is raised for a great emergency only half the increment is to come to the Imperial Exchequer. That is to say if you raise a million more on excise in Ireland for the defence of the Empire you are to give over £500,000 of it to Ireland for domestic expenditure which requires no augmentation.

This is really to hand over to the Unionists a weapon with which they will smite the Bill under the fifth rib.

I can only express a hope that you will not think it necessary to announce any such alteration in your speech, so that there may be time to consider this vital matter before the Bill is printed.

I find much uneasiness amongst all the members of the Cabinet at not having the opportunity of seeing the Bill in its final form before its introduction, and I only abstained from pressing the matter upon you on the assurance from Morley that there had been and would be no change in the financial arrangements.

All this confusion seems to have arisen from the attempt to introduce the consideration of the disputed and disputable question of *quota* into a scheme which was expressly framed to exclude it altogether.

To Mr. Morley, Harcourt wrote at the same time setting forth at greater length "the absurd consequences" of the proposed change, and continuing:

... When you say that you have settled this matter in consultation with Welby I suppose you had both forgotten for the moment that such an office as that of Chancellor of the Exchequer exists, and that it has some responsibility.

I must request therefore that this change in the financial plan may not be announced to the H. of C. till it has been properly considered before the Bill is printed. . . .

There followed a sharp exchange of notes between the two old colleagues which left its mark for a long time on their intercourse, and which cannot be wholly dissociated from the events of a year later:

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

IRISH OFFICE, *February 13, 1893.*—As we are to have a Cabinet to-morrow, it is not necessary that I should trouble you with a reply to your letter. I can only say that, as at present advised, I am quite as determined to resist the clause as it stood, as you are to insist upon it. Your reference to my consultation of Welby is quite uncalled for. I did so with Mr. Gladstone's sanction, and that is enough. What you do is ostentatiously to hold aloof from the business, and then when others do the best they can, you descend upon them with storm and menace.

That you should have on such a morning written as you have done to Mr. G. is the kind of thing that Brougham would have done, and nobody else that I have read of in modern public life.

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

11, DOWNING STREET, *February 13.*—I am too old to quarrel with any one about anything, and therefore shall regard your angry letter as not written.

I don't remember the incident in Brougham's career to which you refer. You are so much better up in history than I am that you

will be able to tell me what that Chancellor did when the Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant entered the Court of Chancery and pronounced judgment in his place without communication with him and contrary to his known opinion, and in addition altered the text of an important legal bill on the eve of its introduction without notice to the head of the law and contrary to the decision of the Cabinet.

We differ apparently fundamentally as to the principles of administration. I doubt however if you will find that Mr. Gladstone agrees with you that the Ch. of the Exch. is a *quantité négligeable* in questions of finance.

But, as you say, this may keep till to-morrow. If you had thought fit to consult me yesterday, as you might easily have done before instructing the draftsman to alter the Bill, I think I could have given you very good reasons against such a proceeding.

In the meanwhile you must forgive me if I try to keep up the constitutional fiction that a Ch. of Exch. has something to say to finance, if it were only for the sake of keeping up the discipline of the department.

Gladstone offered Harcourt a Cabinet meeting to consider the subject of Irish excise next day, and in his speech avoided reference to the point. Harcourt sent him another severe criticism of the proposal on February 15. He took no part in the debate in the House, and the Journal on February 14 records, "W. V. H. was out of the House during the financial part of the speech [Mr. Balfour's reply], and when he returned Fowler said, 'Balfour has been making in the House your speeches in the Cabinet.'" There was much heated discussion in the Cabinet that followed on the subject, and in the end the financial proposals were modified much in accordance with Harcourt's wishes. Ireland was to be empowered to levy new taxes and her Imperial contribution was fixed at one-third of her ascertained income, in addition to the yield of any imperial tax levied for the express purpose of war or any special defence. This proportion was not fixed on the quota principle, but represented roughly the actual contribution of Ireland to the Imperial Exchequer, i.e. the difference between Irish Revenue and Expenditure. This amount was, however, to be temporarily reduced by a grant of £500,000 on account of the Irish police. Harcourt was so satisfied with this arrangement that his most weighty contribution to the discussion of the

Bill (July 24) was a defence of the financial clauses, in which he showed that the relatively small contribution of Ireland to Imperial taxation did not mean that Ireland was more lightly taxed than Great Britain. It meant that the taxation was swallowed up by the cost of civil government in Ireland. Thus the cost of police was 2s. 10d. per head in England, 1s. 11d. in Scotland and 6s. 10d. in Ireland. "That," he said, "is the cost of resolute government."

## II

Nothing of the conflict behind the scenes was reflected in the House, and Harcourt (to whom Gladstone had transferred the duty of communicating with the Queen) did not fail in his reports to Her Majesty to convey the impression that the struggle was going well for the Government. Referring to Gladstone's speech in introducing the Bill, he said, "In point of eloquence and power it was equal to the best achievements of his prime. If there was less of the fire of his younger days, it had all the mellow dignity of age, and the appeal at the close to the last work of his declining years was singularly impressive." And, describing the scene when the debate on the introduction of the Bill ended, he said :

. . . But at the close there was a striking and pathetic spectacle when the aged statesman of eighty-three walked up from the Bar to the Table to present his Bill, and the whole audience felt that it was a sight they would never witness again. The Liberal Party rose as a body to salute a Chief, who, whatever may be thought of his policy, has fought with unexampled pertinacity and courage a desperate battle—qualities which Englishmen are never slow to recognize and admire.

During the Easter and Whitsun recesses, the Unionists carried on a widespread campaign against the Bill in the country, and when the House met on May 8 to begin the discussion in Committee it was evident that the struggle would be severe. It turned largely upon the question of the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, and Henry James moved an amendment specifically declaring that the



authority of the Imperial Parliament "shall remain unaffected and undiminished over all persons, matters and things within the Queen's dominions." \*A few days before Harcourt had written to Gladstone begging him to adopt James's clause on the ground that it would please English voters and could not reasonably be objected to by the Irishmen, as it proposed to retain for the Imperial Parliament only such supremacy as was already in force over the self-governing Dominions. Gladstone accepted the amendment in the abstract, but wanted it deferred to a later part of the Bill. In the end the James amendment was adopted and a good many other concessions made to the Unionists which, while unacceptable to the Irish, did not mitigate the hostility of the Opposition. After the application of the closure in Committee on June 28 the temper of the discussions grew more bitter, the feeling culminating in a lamentable scene on the last day of the closure time table (July 27), when Chamberlain made his violent attack on Gladstone. "The Prime Minister calls 'black' and they say 'It is good'; the Prime Minister calls 'white' and they say 'It is better.' It is always the voice of a god. Never since the days of Herod has there been such slavish adulation." What followed is recorded in the Journal :

*July 27.*— . . . There was a loud outburst at this and cries from the Irish of "Judas." Mellor (the Chairman) put the question amidst indescribable confusion. Part of the House went out into the Division Lobby, but all the Tories remained shouting for the word "Judas" to be taken down, and refused to leave until this was done. In the midst of this Logan walked over to the Front Opposition Bench, and began arguing with Bowles, Hanbury and Fisher, who sit behind it. They shouted at him that he was out of order standing up. He said he would put himself in order by sitting down, which he did on the Front Opposition Bench. Fisher [W. Hayes Fisher] at once struck him on the back of his head, seized him by the collar, and threw him off the Bench. There was a general scuffle, in which E. Marjoribanks crossed the House, seized Logan by the shoulders, and took him down to the Bar. At the same time a sort of general free fight took place at the top of the gangway between the Tories and Irish, fists being freely used. Saunderson, Willie Redmond, young Allen, and others, were conspicuous in the middle of it. The Serjeant-at-Arms, John Burns, Rees-Davies and E.

Marjoribanks made their way into the middle of the combatants, and gradually separated them. All this time there had been consultation at the Table between Balfour, Churchill, Mellor and Vicary Gibbs, which resulted in the Speaker being sent for by Mellor. His arrival was greeted with loud cheers from all over the House. Mellor made a statement to him of what had taken place about the " Judas " cries. The Speaker then stated his view of the matter, but was met by constant cries of " Yes " and " No," and in despair and some temper he sat down, saying, " Then I call upon the Leader of the House to inform me what did occur." This put Mr. Gladstone about a good deal, but he reported what he could of it, complaining that his eyes and ears did not serve him very well. Arthur Balfour corroborated him, and, several men having stated that T. P. O'Connor had used the word " Judas," the Speaker called upon him to withdraw, which he did very adroitly by apologizing if by any words of his the scene had been caused in which two of his friends had been physically assaulted. The Speaker then left the Chair. . . .

In September the Bill was rejected in the House of Lords by a vote of 419 to 41, and the work to which Gladstone had devoted his later years was left to other and very different hands to accomplish.

Apart from the Irish issue which held the centre of the stage during this unprecedented session, there was much to engage the mind of the Government at this time. The year had opened with another episode in the indeterminate and perplexing story of England in Egypt, and in this connection once more there was a difference in the point of view of Harcourt and Lord Rosebery. The incident arose through the action of the new Khedive, Abbas, a boy of fifteen, who in January dismissed three ministers who were regarded as friendly to England. Cromer took a high line in the matter and refused to recognize the Khedive's nominees, and in this he was supported by Lord Rosebery, who in the name of the Cabinet informed him that so long as England occupied Egypt her advice must be followed by the Egyptian Government. Harcourt, who had always been hostile to the permanent occupation of Egypt, took strong objection to Cromer's insistence that the Khedive must be made to yield " at all costs." Commenting on Cromer's statement that the *coup d'état* (of the Khedive)

was prearranged with French and Russian Consuls-General, Harcourt wrote :

. . . We are now able to understand what Lord Cromer means by "at any cost," viz., a conflict with France. The means that he proposes is a military *coup d'état* by England displacing by armed force the Egyptian officials in those departments, and also to take military possession of the Egyptian telegraphs. . . . It is hardly necessary to say that this amounts to the annexation of Egypt, a claim to our right of exclusive possession, and is an entire breach of the European understanding on which our occupation rests. . . .

The danger was removed by a compromise. The dismissed premier was not reinstated nor the Khedive's nominee appointed, but a third choice was made for the post. In this way the Khedive's humiliation was avoided, but the British troops in Egypt were reinforced at the beginning of February as a reminder that the forces of the Crown were behind Cromer.

### III

With two other colleagues Harcourt was at the time in conflict on the question of estimates. As usual his indignation on the subject of national expenditure was directed against the war departments, and the fact that those departments were in the control of such moderate men as Spencer and Campbell-Bannerman did not diminish his resentment, for his view was that his struggle was not with the heads of departments, but the aggressive admirals and generals in the background. His industry in conducting these controversies was unwearied. If he was supplied with tables drawn up by the officials, Harcourt replied with tables of his own drawn up on a different classification, and called for the official comments on them. He was encouraged in his attempts to cut down the estimates by the approval of Gladstone, who wrote to him from Biarritz (January 1), "Both the heads (Spencer and Campbell-Bannerman) are men who I think might not dislike being supported against professional oppressors." Fortified by this sanction Harcourt wrote to Spencer a letter in which he said :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

MALWOOD, *January 4, 1893.*— . . . I answered that I was glad to receive that information and that I would do my *level best* to "support both the heads against their professional oppressors," and that I was delighted to be assured they "would like it." But I at the same time expressed my grave doubts whether "both the heads" and I had the smallest influence or control over the professional oppressors who were absolute masters of the situation, the consequence of which is that we shall have the honour of presenting to Parliament the greatest warlike estimates that were ever voted by the House of Commons in time of peace. . . .

Goschen boasted in all his budgets that there were no supplementary estimates on army and navy, but that they had kept within their votes. *..But nous avons changé tout cela.* I suppose they had some control over their people. We appear to have none. Besides this there are large supplementary estimates in all the civil departments, and we are promised a great increment on every vote for next year. For new ministers are always delighted to earn a reputation in their departments by profuse expenditure.

Verily in six months we have out-Heroded Herod and out-jingooed the Jingoes. We have annexed more territory and spent more money than any Government that preceded us. The Tories are great fools if they do not do all they can to keep us in office, for, if we remain in, we shall have forfeited for ever the right to criticize any folly of which they could be capable. No wonder they are fond of *tu quoque's*. We manufacture enough to last them ten years.

I don't know who is going to find the money or ask Parliament to sanction all this. I am however acquainted with one person who will not.

Even the most amiable of men have their limits of forbearance, and Spencer and Campbell-Bannerman, to whom a letter similar to that written to Spencer had been sent, replied, each in his own fashion, with some natural asperity :

*Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.*

WAR OFFICE, *January 6.*—Estimates. I do not know what gadfly has stung you and caused such a jobation as you have launched at me. Other people besides the Treasury are doing their best to keep down estimates, but while there is no difficulty whatever in propounding general principles, there is a good deal in keeping in check the actual growth of requirements.

It is by no means the easy thing it was ten years ago ; and I doubt very much if the country would support any violent upsetting of recent arrangements even in the interest of immediate saving, however convenient. I will do, and am doing, what I can ; but I

honestly tell you if anything would slacken my zeal it would be to be fulminated at from mid-air!

All I can promise is that I will bring things down as much as possible.

As to a supplementary estimate, if one is necessary, why is it? Simply because Goschen cut down too far, and because too sanguine a view was taken. That is no discredit to us. The sum spoken of here was a good round figure to give for answer to a first inquiry; the reality will be far short of it; and even the sum named *included* the Maplin money. I am glad to bring that degree of comfort to you!

Seriously you need not be afraid; the departments will not be unreasonable; let 11, Downing Street be equally sensible, and all will go well.

"When I get letters from you," wrote Spencer (January 6), "I never quite know what they will be, whether I must expect banter, anger or serious argument. Whatever they are, they always point to friendly conclusions in the near or distant future." And, after replying to Harcourt's criticism, he concluded, "I cannot banter like you, but I fear I can be angry. I am not so now, and I do not pretend to argue against you, although I can be obstinate when I think I am right."

Harcourt thereupon turned his guns upon another department. Writing to Mr. Arthur Acland, the Minister of Education, he said:

*Harcourt to Mr. Acland.*

MALWOOD, *January 9*.—You remember Hogarth's picture of the old steward in the "Rake's Progress" holding up his hands in horror and despair at the extravagance of his young master. Well, that is just my moral and physical attitude at this moment. I have just sanctioned an additional £250,000 or thereabouts for your department, and here you are like Oliver asking for more! There are sixteen of us, and at your present allowance of increment that will add just £4,000,000 to the estimates.

We already promise to be the most extravagant Government that has ever held office in this country. . . . The War Office has already its quarter of a million of supplementary estimates, with a prospect of double that amount of increment for the estimates of next year. This is indispensable to save us from instant invasion, and to satisfy the generals and colonels, who are almost as exacting as professors and artists. The navy want more ships to replace those they have

sunk in time of peace. The Board of Trade are bound to satisfy the demands of the Labour Party. The Home Office has requirements on behalf of factories and workshops. Ireland is a bottomless pit; Scotland wants hundreds of thousands for railways to the Hebrides; the Post Office has fresh demands and diminished income; the Board of Agriculture is convinced that the ruined landlords can only be saved by more officials at higher salaries; the Colonial Office requires more money for new empires; the Foreign Office must be supplied with greater means for making the influence of England more felt throughout the universe; the Office of Works has splendid projects for Haussmanizing the metropolis and erecting more public buildings, which will more exceed the estimates and be more unfitted for the purpose for which they were intended than those which have gone before; a higher rate of wages by way of *centimes additionels* in every department; and, as if this were not enough to ruin the most overflowing exchequer, you come down upon me with the men of science and the men of art, compared with whom the daughters of the horse-leech are mild and moderate extortioners.

I have always observed that an English gentleman, when he finds that his expenditure largely exceeds his income, has a certain regulated order in his compulsory economies.

1. He cyts off his charities.
2. He reduces his expenditure on bric-à-brac; perhaps he sells his china and his pictures and finally his books.
3. He retrenches on the education of his children.
4. When reduced to extremity he may give up his orchids.
5. He might even diminish his stud.
6. Or reduce his game.
7. Rather than go to the workhouse he might even reconsider his establishment.

I remember a story of a former Duke of Devonshire who called in a friend (C. Greville) to advise him on the head of retrenchment in his household, and when told that it might be superfluous to keep *four confectioners* he replied with simple dignity, "After all, a man must have a biscuit." . . . It is the business of my office to resist such a policy. . . . I have been brought up in the old-fashioned principles of public economy, and I shall not regret it if my last political efforts are made in its defence.

But this tilt at the Minister of Education was only an interlude in the major conflict with the Admiralty, which continued with unabated vigour. The attitude of France was still the source of much disquiet, and the controversy between Harcourt and the admirals turned on the comparison of the British and French navies, with special reference

to the relative values of big ships and small vessels. Harcourt prepared notes on the French navy, and the Admiralty retaliated with notes on his notes. They prepared tables, and he prepared counter tables, and when the Admiralty refused to accept his reading of figures he retaliated by giving it in the House. Writing to Lord Rosebery in the midst of this controversy, he said :

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

11, DOWNING STREET, February 18.— . . . I think you will like to see the enclosed lists—they will gladden your Jingo soul. They are the result of a cross-examination conducted by me at the Admiralty of the whole Board in their cocked hats. So you may rely on the list as authentic.

It includes all the ships completed and which will be complete this year, for all the navies of the world.

- You will see that we are two to one as against the French in first-class battleships (armour-clads), on which the real dominion of the sea depends. Our superiority in the other classes is almost equally marked.

At the end you find a classification of all the navies of the world.

In the head of great cruisers of high speed and heavy armament our superiority is still more overwhelming.

I have only one scruple in sending you this paper, and that is lest you should draw the natural inference that the wisest and most prudent thing you could possibly do is to go to war at once, when you can easily destroy all the navies in existence.

The French will not be able to add another ship to their list before 1896, so you can finish them off this year, and the rest (as the Irishman says) at convenience.

Then we might have a little repose—possibly even a surplus. . . .

It was a striking and impressive sight last night to see the old man walk up the House with the H.R. Bill to be presented at the table. . . .

These struggles with the departments were the normal prelude to the preparation of the Budget, which Harcourt introduced on April 24. The past year showed "a miserable mouse of a surplus" (£20,000), and the estimates for the coming year indicated a deficit of one-and-a-half millions. He had intended to carry through his scheme of death duties, but he was compelled to delay that expedient because the produce of the death duties would not be immediate, and in these circumstances he balanced his accounts by another

penny on the income tax. In his speech he delivered a sort of swan song on the tradition of economy :

. . . I believe the Prime Minister and myself are the last representatives of the vanished creed [economy]. The saying has been attributed to me that every one is a socialist now. I do not know whether I ever said that, but this I will say—there are no economists now. Financial economy has gone the way of political economy, and a Chancellor of the Exchequer preaching against extravagance is the "voice of one crying in the wilderness." We hear a great deal about the stinginess of the Treasury. I wish the Treasury had a little more power, as it has the will to be more stingy. . . . The Chancellor of the Exchequer may hold up his hands in despair, like the old steward in the "Rake's Progress," but the money is spent, and, as the French say, "the wine is drawn and you must pay for it." After all, the causes of this are not far to seek. Economy was possible, was necessary, and even popular, in former days. Governments were compelled to be economical. The people demanded it, and the House of Commons supported it. Sir R. Peel was an economical minister. At that time the nation was poor ; capital was deficient, trade was bad, the weight of debt was crushing, and taxation relatively to the resources of the people was enormously heavy. People were then obliged to "attend" to the pence because they had no pounds to "look after." But now the condition of things is changed ; the nation has grown rich, taxation compared to the resources of all classes is relatively light, and this is probably in proportion to its wealth the most lightly taxed nation in Europe at the present time. Therefore it is, perhaps, not unnatural that any one who comes forward with a proposal for increased expenditure is welcomed as if he had discovered a new pleasure. Private members with large hearts and small responsibilities take up some favoured scheme or some favoured class of the community. They demand higher wages, greater pensions ; they desire that the State should undertake new duties, fresh responsibilities, larger expenditure. We are eager to create new empires here and annex fresh territory there, to reduce postal charges all over the world, to relieve more rates, to undertake lifeboats, etc. The country is well organized, the House of Commons well canvassed, and one afternoon, in the gaiety of our hearts, we pass a Resolution unanimously which is to cost us a few millions when it comes into full operation some years hence. . . . I belong myself, as I have said, to the old school, and I would gladly see less money spent, for I think a good deal of it is wasted. But, if I may reverse an old saying, I would say that those who call the tune must pay the piper. I cannot, however, honestly say to the House of Commons or the country, "If you choose to spend the money, you cannot afford it," for, as I have said, the wealth of the country has increased and is increasing year by year.



You may find yourselves in temporary straits, but there is no occasion for apprehension or disquiet. The condition of your affairs is sound, solid and prosperous. The resources of the country are ample and are always accumulating.

Prior to the introduction of the Budget, Harcourt had brought in a Local Option Bill, the principal object of which was to give the localities—the wards in the towns and the parishes in the country—by a direct vote of the ratepayers the power to prohibit the issue of licenses. It stipulated that the majority was to be two-thirds. The Bill also provided for Sunday closing by the will of a simple majority. The subject was one in which he had long been interested, and replying to a interruption, he said :

. . . An hon. member opposite challenged me, I thought with an ironical cheer, as to the date of my conversion on this subject. That question was once asked me in the House of Commons, and my answer—it was a true and sincere answer—was that it was from the date when in the responsibilities in the Home Department I had cognizance of those causes of crime which led many a man, aye, and many a woman, to the loss of liberty and life, and brought them even to a shameful death. Those are thoughts and reflections which are not easily effaced from the mind and conscience . . .

But though the Bill was given a first reading, it was still-born. It evoked criticisms from one side and contrary proposals from the other. One group of the temperance party wanted Sunday closing to be made universal ; another advocated the Gothenburg system, and brought forward in the House of Lords a rival measure, sponsored by the Bishop of Chester, for setting up limited liability companies to sell drink to the public under popular control, the profits to be applied to public needs ; a third policy, that of the Church of England Temperance Society, proposed the reduction of licenses with compensation.

In addition to all this a Local Veto Bill for Wales, which Harcourt supported, was introduced, and, referring to the debate on it, Harcourt, in his customary letter to the Queen (March 15), signalled the appearance of a new figure, destined to play a conspicuous part in the affairs of the world. "There were some good speeches made on both sides,"

he said, "especially one by a Welsh member, Mr. Lloyd George, the young member for Carnarvon Boroughs."

But among the new forces on the Government side, Mr. Asquith had the most conspicuous place. He was in charge of the Employers' Liability Bill, and he introduced the Suspensory Bill, which, as Harcourt told the Queen in his official communication, was "brought forward as a preliminary to Welsh Disestablishment," its purpose being to "prevent for a limited time the creation of new interests in Church of England bishoprics, dignities and benefices in Wales and Monmouth." Harcourt was much impressed by Mr. Asquith's promise, and in a letter (April 15) congratulating him on "the splendid success of your great speech," he said :

. . . The brilliant manner in which you have exceeded the high expectations of your friends, both in and out of the House of Commons, is a supreme pleasure to us all and to none more than myself. It is a mighty strength and encouragement to a Party to have the prospect in the future of such a champion, and to look forward with confidence to the *spes surgentis Julii*. . . .

Harcourt himself was chiefly occupied in his departmental work and in relieving Gladstone of many of the tasks of leadership in the House, but he took his part in most of the debates, and was particularly active in support of the Parish Councils Bill, which fulfilled one of his most long-cherished aims, that of making village life brighter and more democratic. He supported the motion (March 24) in favour of the payment of members on the ground that a nation cannot adopt democratic principles and a democratic suffrage without accepting the consequences which naturally follow. "I have never believed in the theory which I know is entertained by some people," he said, "that you should take the wise and the good in order to administer the affairs of other people. That is the principle of a patronizing aristocracy or of a beneficent monarchy; that is not the basis of representative government." In his multitudinous records to the Queen of the course of the debates he did not spare his opponents. Thus, referring (March 1) to a

long debate on "the stale subject of Bimetallism," he said :

. . . The old fallacies of those who seek for the sake of their own advantage to raise the price of commodities by tampering with the currency were paraded once more with wearisome iteration. The debate was opened by Sir Meysey Thomson in rather a tiresome speech, and seconded by Mr. Samuel Montagu, the Jew banker. Mr. Gladstone at once replied in a firm and decided tone, speaking with great vivacity and force and treating the subject with all the light sarcasm of which he is such a master. Mr. Goschen replied in a speech which much astonished the House, which had been used to a totally different language from him. It was impossible to discover from his utterances which side he intended to espouse upon this vital question, upon which the commercial interests of the country depend.

The motion though ostensibly only declaring in favour of renewing the conference at Brussels and urging the delegates to discuss some new method of currency, was in fact directed to the overthrow of the single gold standard which has existed ever since the great war in this country, and which is believed by all sound financiers to be the basis of our commercial system, which has made London the money market of the world.

After dinner Mr. Chaplin rehearsed the whole bimetallic syllabus, and ended with a strong personal attack on the English delegates at Brussels, i.e. to those who maintained the monometallic system. To this Sir William Harcourt made a warm reply. The division was taken at twelve o'clock, and bimetallism was defeated—it may be hoped finally, by a majority of 81 to the great confusion of its leaders, Mr. Balfour, Mr. H. Chaplin and now Mr. Goschen. There was a good deal of cross voting. Some ministerialists voted for the motion, and many Unionists, including Lord R. Churchill and Mr. Chamberlain, supported the Government.

#### IV

This candid method of handling affairs led to some friction with the Queen. She was in no cordial frame of mind about the policy of the Government, and writing to Harcourt early in the Session, said :

*Queen Victoria to Harcourt.*

WINDSOR CASTLE, February 26.—The Queen thanks Sir Wm Harcourt for his regular and full reports of the proceedings in Parliament. She cannot, however, help saying that they fill her with grave anxiety. The measures lately introduced seem to her to tend towards the disruption of her Empire, and to the disestablishment of the ancient and venerated Church of England so bound up as it is with the Throne !

You seem to the Queen to be playing with fire, and she cannot think that loyal servants of the Crown can desire the results which they are likely to arrive at.

The Queen thanks Sir William Harcourt very much for his inquiries after her dear Granddaughter Princess Alice of Hesse. She has been very unwell this winter, and has had a bad attack in her ear from which however she has now happily recovered.

To this indictment, Harcourt replied with firmness, recalling to the Queen's recollection his letter to her in 1885, in which he expressed the opinion that "when the Government of that day was defeated by a combination of the Tory Party with the Irish Nationalists on the basis of an attack upon Lord Spencer's Irish Administration, and a pledge of amnesty to the Maamtrasna murderers, the old system of Irish Government had for the future become impossible, and that it would be necessary to resort to a new departure and a different policy." He said the Home Rule Bill conceded a far inferior degree of self-government to Ireland than that which "by the unanimous consent of Parliament and the Crown was granted in the year 1782 to what is called Grattan's Parliament," and he told the Queen in round terms that the country wanted the question "settled and put out of the way upon some moderate and reasonable footing," pointing to the results of the elections since the Bill had been introduced as his evidence on the point. As to the Welsh Bill, he said it did not involve the fate of the English Church, "though he agrees in the opinion lately expressed by Lord Derby that the spirit of the age is not favourable to ecclesiastical establishments as such. The real strength of the Church of England," he continued, "does not lie in her establishment or endowments." . . . "The case of the Church in Wales is in fact analogous to that of the Irish Church, the disestablishment of which Sir Wm. feels sure that the Queen recognizes to have been a just and necessary measure. It is impossible to justify or maintain an establishment for the benefit of a minority of a people." He concluded with a touch of that skill with the "trowel" which he shared with Disraeli:

. . . Sir William humbly trusts that he will have the Queen's forgiveness for endeavouring to show that, even if mistaken in his views in the character of one of the most loyal and devoted servants of Her person and the Crown, he is incapable of promoting any policy which in his conscience he believes would be injurious to Her Empire or Her Throne.

Sir William begs kindly to thank Your Majesty for informing him of the recovery of Princess Alice of Hesse. Her singular beauty and charming simplicity and grace left an impression not easily effaced.

The Princess and her brother appeared to Sir William like a prince and princess in a fairy tale. And he was especially struck with the pretty and graceful manner of the Grand Duke's affectionate devotion to the Queen.

The Queen replied through Ponsonby, who wrote :

*Ponsonby to Harcourt.*

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, *February 27, 1893.*—The Queen has carefully read your letter received this morning.

Her Majesty says she certainly cannot remember a combination being effected between the Tory Party and the Irish Nationalists or any pledge being given by the Tory Party to amnesty murderers. But she does remember your advice given to her to oppose the Irish Nationalists' demands for a separate Parliament, which many of that Party explained were only the first steps to separation.

The Queen fully believes in your loyalty and patriotism, two characteristics which have not always been conspicuous among many of those who are now your friends and fellow-workers.

*Harcourt to Ponsonby.*

11, DOWNING STREET, *February 28.*—It does not become a loyal subject to argue with the Queen.

If I were only conversing with *you*, I should remind you of the arrangement made by Lord R. Churchill with the Nationalists in 1885 that if they would turn out the Gladstone Govt. the Crimes Bill should not be renewed. The meeting of Lord Carnarvon with Parnell. The strict and effectual co-operation of the Parnellites with the Tories at the General Election of 1885. Hartington's speech in the Maamtrasna debate and at the dinner to Spencer in 1885.

However this is now ancient history. *Tempora mutantur.*

I am now engaged in shutting up public-houses and gin-palaces instead of Irish members.

Pray express to the Queen my humble thanks for the gracious expression towards myself, and offer my excuses for my absence from

the Drawing Room to-day as I am up to my chin in bimetallism to encounter the redoubtable Chaplin on that interesting topic.

*Ponsonby to Harcourt.*

WINDSOR CASTLE, *March 3, 1893.*—The correspondence of the last few days was solely between you and the Queen—so I told her of the contents of your letter. And she gave me no orders to reply. Therefore I only now write to thank you for yours, which tell me much which I did not know before. I cannot find Hartington's speech pledging himself to amnesty murderers, nor did I know that Lord R. Churchill promised on behalf of his Government that they would not bring in a Crimes Act.

All the papers I have looked at, and my recollection of the conversation I had at the time, compel me to believe that Lord Carnarvon made no compact with Parnell—Lord Carnarvon denied that he had done so.

So we must leave off in disagreement—I believe my friend Lord Carnarvon, you believe your friend Mr. Parnell.

*Ponsonby to Harcourt.*

ST. JAMES'S PALACE, *March 8, 1893.*—My dear Harcourt, I am sorry I misread your letter, but am glad to find that you did not accuse your late colleagues of amnestying murderers.

I saw Spencer yesterday and explained to him that our correspondence had become academical as H.M. had dropped it—tho' I had not. Yours very truly, Henry F. Ponsonby.

There was a further source of trouble a few weeks later. In Parliament the Opposition had adopted extreme obstructive tactics, and in his letters to the Queen Harcourt expressed himself on the subject with more freedom than discretion. This gave dissatisfaction, the nature of which is indicated in the following correspondence :

*Queen Victoria to Harcourt.*

VILLA PALMIERI, FLORENCE, *March 29, 1893.*—The Queen thanks Sir Wm. Harcourt for his full and regular reports. She does not like to enter on controversial subjects, but as Sir Wm. Harcourt so often refers with apparent indignation to the "obstructiveness" of the Opposition, she must observe that nothing could equal the obstructiveness of the Liberal-Radical Party when they were out of office, and that they have not much right to expect similar tactics not being pursued now. Besides, which Sir Wm. Harcourt must remember what a very strong and growing repugnance there is to Home Rule, and what a dread there is of the Bill passing, and how

this feeling is increasing in Ireland. Can the Govt. then wonder if great efforts are made to resist it—especially to resist the attempts to force it through in so great a hurry?

*Harcourt to Ponsonby.*

TREASURY CHAMBERS, *April 5, 1893.*— . . . I am not sorry to think that for the present at least my daily "news letter" (as it is called in India) is to be superseded, as it only earns me reproaches which may be just but which are not pleasant.

I have done my best to give a fair and impartial report and tell an unvarnished tale—and often sat up half the night when I was tired to death to accomplish the task. But I find that is not at all what is wanted, and that if I don't chant a high Tory anthem on all occasions I only give offence—and that your pure Tory atmosphere does not tolerate the intrusion of any light but that to which it is accustomed. I am sorry for it, as I think it is sometimes an advantage even in the most august stations to hear both sides and to learn what are the views and sentiments of the majority of the H. of Commons and even of the responsible Government; indeed I can recall the times in the good old days when this was not impossible. But I find I was right when I told you the "initiative" would not do.<sup>1</sup> I am the last person in the world to force unwelcome truths on unwilling ears. I shall therefore in the future confine myself strictly to the narration of events without note or comment and leave to sound politicians like yourself to expound their bearing. You will filter out any noxious Liberal pollution. . . .

*Ponsonby to Harcourt.*

FLORENCE, *April 9, 1893.*—It is always a real pleasure to the private secretary when the Queen and her Ministers agree, and therefore I am glad to perceive that Her Majesty and you have the same object in view.

She advises her ministers to listen to the other side, and you say that it is an advantage to her to hear both sides, and with this laudable object you both endeavour to promote each other's happiness. I am afraid that neither fully relish the advice. No doubt it has its drawbacks—as the Irish judge said, "it often upsets one's decision to hear the other side." But I think you are mistaken in supposing that your comments are "not wanted."

She reads your letters carefully and she discusses them, but she will have her say in return. Nor will I admit you are right, though when I spoke to you I thought you were, in saying the "initiative" would not do. I now think she expects it. You must not imagine that she considers you are wrong in telling her what you think, but

<sup>1</sup> This refers to a discussion in which it was suggested that Ministers should initiate the consideration of public questions with the Queen.

then you must not consider her wrong in telling you what she thinks. And Mr. Gladstone always praises her for her "frankness."

The weather has been lovely, and H.M. visits the galleries and the churches, where the monks and priests gaze with wonder on the Mohammedan who wheels her chair and the legs of the Highlander who carries her cloak. . . .

*Harcourt to Ponsonby.*

'11, DOWNING STREET, April 12, 1893.—Many thanks for your good-natured letter. You are always good-natured. I am in the unfortunate position of being compelled all day and all night long to "hear both sides," especially *the other side*. If I enjoyed the prerogative of protecting myself from hearing anything but what I approved I have no doubt I should gladly avail myself of it. But you will admit that I shall be wise to avoid controversies when it would not be becoming in me to "answer back." I remember a very wise saying of dear old Dizzy in this connection: "I never *contradict*, but I sometimes *forget*." This appears singularly applicable to the present situation.

We are going on grinding the old tunes on the old hurdy-gurdy here without producing any effect on either side on the votes of the H. of C. or the opinion of the country.

After this incident Harcourt's official letters to the Queen lost something of their former liveliness, but they continued to be excellent summaries of the proceedings in the House, enlivened with personal jottings about the speeches of members and the incidents of the debates.

V

At no period of their long and not always harmonious association were the relations of Gladstone and Harcourt pleasanter than during these closing months of the former's public life. The two statesmen were in constant communication on a multitude of subjects, and were generally in complete agreement. Gladstone's letters were now generally touched with the note of farewell, as when writing to Harcourt (December 9) on the London "Betterment" Bill, he concluded, "Pray do not let it hamper you or Asquith, both of whom probably understand the subject much better than I do," or when dealing with the conduct of business in the House, he said (September 16):



. . . . I only wish I could presume that this was the last of the incapacities by which I was to be burdensome to my colleagues ; but I hope to scramble through the year without more defalcation by truancy, and as to what is beyond. *Quid sit futurum cras fuge quærevit.*

There is a touching picture of the venerable leader in a letter from Harcourt to his son (May 30) :

. . . I had a rather painful interview with Mr. G. this morning. He began by telling me that his eyesight was almost altogether gone, and that he could not read MSS. at all and hardly a book. His mind was evidently much confused, and we could make little of Irish finance. J. Morley came in whilst we were talking, and was very amiable and reasonable. Mr. G. was much taken aback when we told him that we could not reach the financial clauses before July. He has evidently no idea of the task before him. It is all very sad. He made a most inefficient speech in the H. of C. this afternoon, almost incoherent, and very weak in voice and manner. It distressed all much. You would say he was twenty years older than he was before the holidays. . . .

But there was no apparent loss of power in his letters to Harcourt dealing with the graver affairs that arose as the Session proceeded, whether in Parliament or abroad. On foreign policy, as on finance, he and Harcourt had common ground, and in the discussions which took place during the summer on the subject of Egypt they were in full agreement. Harcourt drew up the provisional terms of evacuation with the right of re-entry, and in the debate in the House raised by Dilke on the subject there was a preponderance of opinion on the duty of fulfilling the undertaking to withdraw. But the moment was not opportune. Public feeling was still much disturbed in regard to the attitude of France, and at the end of July the relations of the two countries assumed a threatening aspect over the French ultimatum to Siam. Harcourt was away at the most critical moment of the affair, having, with his son and Millais, gone with the Brasseys for a sail in the Channel in the *Sunbeam*. Owing to a mistake by an official on the spot, the French were reported to have issued orders to our two little gunboats at Bangkok to clear out of the place before they began their *blocus*. The report created the greatest alarm. Late at night

(July 30) Gladstone summoned a Cabinet meeting for the next day, and in at least one London newspaper office a leader was in type announcing that we were at war with France. Happily the mistake (due to an imperfect knowledge of French on the part of the official) was found out during the night, and the storm passed as suddenly as it had arisen, the Siamese bowing to the French ultimatum. But the incident was symptomatic of the feverish state of Anglo-French relations then and for some years to come. Harcourt came back to find the danger over, and writing to Lord Rosebery (August 4), said :

. . . I must write you a line of congratulation on your brilliant success in the settlement of Siam. . . . However, last Saturday I braved the danger, and entered the port of Havre at the critical moment, and was not made a prisoner of war. You little know how much of your success on that fatal Sunday depended upon the appearance in Rouen of the brave crew of the *Sunbeam*, which carried terror into the souls of the French. . . .

Of the personal incidents of this time, one or two claim brief notice. The relations of Harcourt and his elder son continued of that mutually absorbing nature which had been their character for thirty years. Approaches had been made to the younger man to become a candidate for Parliament, but he preferred to remain as his father's private secretary. Harcourt, however, was anxious that he should have an independent career, and the Office of Woods and Forests becoming vacant, he wrote to his son urging him, if it was offered him, to accept it. In the course of a moving letter (September 11) he said : " You are young, I am old. You are coming on, I am going off. My time, certainly in public life, is not for long. I should like to see that you are settled and independent, and that when I am gone you had a life and occupation already settled for you." He glanced at an eventuality, which at this time seemed assured, when he added, " Of course if patronage of this kind ever fell into my hands it would be more difficult for me to give it you than if it came from Mr. Gladstone." Lewis Harcourt's reply was :

. . . 1st. I do not wish to take or do anything which would cut me off from my work with you, in which I think I am of some real use at times.

2nd. It would be denounced as a "job" (which it would be), and would damage you and the Govt.

3rd. It would cut me off altogether from political life, which I am fond of.

So don't let us think any more of it.

Bless you.

Harcourt persisted. "I know very well that you want to look after me at your own expense. This however I do not intend you should do," he said. But the son was adamant. "The place where I am happiest and of most use is by your side, and I want to stay there," he wrote, and Harcourt telegraphed, "Bless you for your letter. I accept your decision gratefully."

In September Harcourt, his wife and his eldest son went to Italy, calling at Wiesbaden for a consultation with the oculist on the way. Writing to Ponsonby (September 22), he said :

. . . I start for foreign parts Friday next. This happy nation will be better governed for the next weeks than it has been all the rest of the year. There will be no Parliament, no ministers and no permanent heads of departments in London, and everything will go well.

I hope you will not allow Rosebery to disturb your slumbers by alarms as to foreign affairs—I will take care of the Triple Alliance at Como, and if necessary engage the French and Russian fleets in the Mediterranean.

It was a happy holiday which recalled old memories. Writing to his sister Emily from Venice (October 15), he said :

. . . I cannot be in this place without having my mind and my heart full of the recollections of our youth when we first saw it together more than forty years ago. Since that we have had many sorrows, but also much happiness. But amidst all my memories there is none more charming to me than that of our Italian tour in our early days. I have been once since to Venice with Loulou when he was ten years old, when we travelled together alone, and we were as close friends then as we are now. He remembers it all as if it were yesterday, and it is a great joy to me to have lived to come

back to it again with him after twenty years. I wish you were with us, and it would make the revival perfect. . . . I spent my sixty-sixth birthday here yesterday, an age which when you and I were here I thought it impossible to reach, and with Lily and Loulou I feel very grateful and happy in the home which makes me so happy and surrounds me with affection and care. . . .

From Florence (October 20) he wrote to Gladstone a gay letter of his experiences and meetings with old friends, which began :

Your letter from Hawarden of the 16th reached me here to-day oppressed with all the delightful sensations of a truant who has escaped from school. Alas, regardless of their doom the little victims play ; no sense have they of ills to come, of cares beyond to-day.

I am sure it must be extremely wrong, because it is so exceedingly pleasant. . . .

Refreshed by his holiday, Harcourt returned to England to carry out his winter offensive against the shameless people, admirals and generals and statesmen, who wanted to dip their hands deeper into the public purse.

## CHAPTER XIV

### GLADSTONE RESIGNS

The Naval Scare—Struggle over the Estimates—Lord George Hamilton's Motion—An Admonition from the Queen—Gladstone threatens Resignation—Perturbation at Biarritz—Declaration against the Lords—An "Outrageous Canard."

WHEN Harcourt returned from Italy the crisis in the fortunes of the Liberal Party which had long been foreseen and had been periodically discussed was imminent. It was plain to all men that the close of the public career of Gladstone was only a question of weeks or months. He had remained in office far beyond the normal limits of nature, and with the defeat of the Home Rule Bill in the House of Lords the last bond which attached him to public life was broken. He could not hope, after this second failure, to carry to a successful issue the policy which alone had kept him in politics for the past nine years, and with that hope gone his sense of duty no longer opposed an obstacle to the enjoyment of that rest to which he had long looked forward. In any circumstances, it may be supposed, the end would not have been delayed, but the storm that arose in the autumn on the subject of the Navy estimates definitely hastened his decision. It brought him into sharp disagreement with most of the prominent members of the Cabinet, and even Harcourt himself was not prepared to carry his opposition to the Admiralty proposals to the extreme limit urged by his Chief. It was a time of panic, and Gladstone had no disposition to end his career as the instrument of what he felt to be an unreasoning fear.

For some time one of those periodical naval alarms which are familiar in our history, and which so easily seize

a people whose life is dependent on the sea, had been gathering force. Ever since the renewal of the Triple Alliance, and the understanding between France and Russia there had developed a spirit of disquiet in the relations of England and France. There was a conviction in the latter country that the Salisbury Administration had been too friendly towards Germany, and the suspicion expressed itself in a series of incidents, in Central Africa, in Egypt and in the East. The momentary panic over the Bangkok affair indicated the state of nerves into which the official world had fallen. The fever, as usual, focused itself on the most vulnerable spot, and the controversy over the Navy, waged by Harcourt with the Admiralty at the close of 1892, was resumed in the autumn of 1893 in a much more combustible atmosphere. The Press was now in full cry, with the pacifist, W. T. Stead, heading a sort of holy crusade for "two keels to one," and Fleet Street pouring out comparisons of the British fleet and the French fleet. The scare was aggravated by the terrible disaster to the *Victoria*, which was rammed by another battleship, the *Royal Sovereign*, in the Mediterranean in June 1893. The calamity caused much concern as to the administration of the Navy, and led to many discussions in Parliament and much controversy in the Press.

In these favourable circumstances the Admiralty put forward proposals which marked a further great advance in naval expenditure, the increase over the normal Navy estimates of 1888-9 (i.e. before the Naval Defence Act) being some four and a half millions, and three millions over the estimates of the preceding year. Into the details of the discussions which Harcourt carried on with the Admiralty it is not necessary to enter fully here. He kept the argument mainly to capital ships, and refused to be alarmed by the fact (curiously parallel with the situation twenty years later) that French naval policy aimed at the multiplication of mosquito craft. Harcourt opened his campaign by revising the Admiralty's comparison of British and French first-class battleships, and writing to Spencer said :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

11, DOWNING STREET, September 28, 1893.— . . . You will see therefore that if the French and the Russians sent every first-class battleship they had into the Mediterranean we could match them there ship for ship and still have ten first-class battleships equal to the whole of the French force available for any purpose in the Channel.

If that is not an overwhelming naval superiority, I don't know what is.

The timidity of these modern admirals and sea-captains, I confess, dismays me.

In the good old days there was a firm belief, which realized itself, that one Englishman was equal to three Frenchmen, but now apparently the faith of these scared tars is that one Frenchman and half a Russian is equal to three Englishmen. Nothing else but such a belief could account for the naval panic.

As regards the great cruisers which will command the distant seas our superiority is even more overwhelming. It is quite obvious that there are not six vessels if you put the whole world together that could meet our fleet, which is more than three times that number.

But, as Brassey well points out, numbers are not the only test. He has taken the trouble to analyse their relative tonnage displacements. He shows that the nineteen British first-class battleships (as admitted by the Admiralty) have a tonnage of 230,500 as against a tonnage of 107,145 for the ten French ships, and if you add, as he proposes, six more ships to the British first-class you will have a tonnage of 290,000 British against 107,000 of first-class French, that is to say a superiority of three to one of the British over the French.

Added to this of course nearly half the British are new ships, and therefore presumably superior in pattern, speed and guns to the French ships in the corresponding class. Upon this in his letter to me Brassey observes, "In each case we see that the superiority in tonnage is greater than the numerical superiority. We build larger and more costly and presumably more powerful ships than those laid down by foreign powers. Hence a mere comparison of numbers will not fairly represent the relative strength." If it is said that the French have laid down four or five new ships, I observe in the French list that the earliest of these ships will not be completed before '96, and the others in '97, but even if we were not to build another first-class ship till '97 we should still, when these French ships were completed, have a majority of ten vessels over the French.

I am very anxious to bring your admirals to book in particulars, and not to let them ride off in vague generalities.

I should like very much to have their specific observations on the case as I have stated it. . . .

"As far as my humble opinion is worth anything, I prefer the experience of the Admiralty to that of Brassey in regard to classification," wrote Spencer (October 29), in sending Harcourt papers drawn up by Sir William White and Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, and he proceeded to reject the method of reckoning naval strength merely by capital ships :

... Where we are dangerously weak (he contended) in case of a sudden outbreak of war is in torpedo-boats. The French have swarms of them. Our policy is to build very fast torpedo-gunboats or destroyers to run down and destroy these torpedo boats ; but we have not enough yet for safety. We do not attempt to compete with the French as to numbers. . . . Torpedo attack will render the Downs, Spithead and Portsmouth, unless protected, useless for our fleets. The Downs and Spithead cannot, it is thought, be protected. Portland, Southampton Water, Portsmouth and (?) can be, and we are preparing to do this with booms. . . .

Harcourt, still sticking to capital ships, retorted that on their own figures the Admiralty admitted that our present superiority was nine over the French alone and six over the French and Russians combined, and that if we did not lay down a ship for three years we should still have "a good superiority over the French." And writing later to Spencer, he said :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

11, DOWNING STREET, November 20.—I am much obliged for the further papers you have sent me. What is really wanted is that the public should be informed of the true facts as we know them, and not be scared by the lying statements of *The Times*. At this moment the world at large are fully convinced that our fleet instead of being vastly superior to the French and Russians combined is "miserably inferior" to the French alone, *vide* Sir S. Baker's letter to *The Times* of to-day.

I send you some papers which I have drawn up from your materials which give a *conspectus* of the *actual* and *future* condition of the several navies.

As to the Russian navy in the *Black Sea*—as I pointed out that fleet cannot enter the Mediterranean except on condition of war with Germany, Austria or Italy, and it is at least as reasonable to join to our navy the fleets of those Powers as to add that of the Russians to the French navy. But the principle of the alarmists is to pile up



every conceivable contingency probable or improbable on one side, and to admit no possible contingency on the other. . . .

I enclose (on note paper) a list of Russian ships, and should be glad to have a *red mark* put against those which are in the Black Sea.

How ridiculous it is to suppose that France and Russia are to drive the English out of the Mediterranean and to take no account of the Italian fleet, which in such an event would instantly join ours and far more than counterbalance the Russians. . . .

The question which puzzled your admirals, viz., why the Russians were building so largely in the Black Sea, seems to me plain enough. They know well enough that in case of a war with Turkey, in which we were the allies of the Turk, we should have free access through the Bosphorus to the Black Sea, and therefore to the vitals of Russia. And the Russian fleet is intended to keep us out of the Black Sea and not to fight us in the Mediterranean. . . .

He exposed (November 27) what he regarded as the knavish tricks of the admirals in ignoring the comparative speed of building in regard to projected ships, insisted that the only just comparison was with France, and that the Russian combination was "a political chimera," and proceeded :

. . . It is quite plain to me that if France and Russia indulge themselves in the amusement of going to war with us in the next four years we ought to give them a tremendous licking, and I don't mean to be scared under those circumstances, nor would any man of common sense who knew the facts. The misfortune of it is that the facts are not known, and the most ridiculous falsehoods on this subject are circulated without contradiction. . . .

"A great part of the scare," he wrote next day, "is due to fixing public attention on the superiority of the French *in the Mediterranean*, totally ignoring the resources of each nation elsewhere. You could easily put an end to this by making the British force at Malta more powerful than that of the French, which you have abundant means to do, and then this silly outcry would be put an end to. I think this would be a good thing to do, though it might cost a little more money—but not near as much as a scare." He returned again (December 9) to what he described as the deliberate withholding of the true facts from the public by the authorities, while the scaremongers were left a free field for the wildest exaggeration :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

December 9.— . . . I will give a single example out of a thousand, a sentence in the *Economist* of to-day which, in commenting on George Hamilton's article, says, "His Lordship comes before us armed with irrefutable facts and figures, and he proves that *in the event of a great European war breaking out at the present moment we are in no condition to place in the Mediterranean a sufficient number of first-rate line-of-battle ships to enable us to face the combined fleets of France and Russia, nor indeed to decisively overmatch the French fleet alone.*"

These are the statements everywhere put forward and universally believed, to which no official contradiction is given, though they are demonstrably untrue, and you know and I know that at the present moment we could if we chose put fifteen first-rate line-of-battle ships against ten of the French in the Mediterranean, and that in three months' time we could put two to one.

I cannot think it right that a responsible Government should allow the nation to be deliberately deceived as to its actual situation.

This has become with me a very vital question, and I can no longer consent to be a party to withholding from the public the true facts of the case. . . .

The controversy grew heated and words strong. "As to what you please to call your observations," wrote Spencer. "Though I have no hunters I can always plant cabbages," remarked Harcourt, with a gay glance at the worst that could happen to him. "You say I gave you no information yesterday except as to the seven battleships," said Spencer (December 28). "I was fully prepared to tell you my story, but whenever I attempted to do so, you checked me or stopped me, or you only accepted information in your own favour, and did not let me unfold what I wished as to cruisers or torpedo-boat destroyers." "No sooner do the Admiralty supply me with one document than I am told they are not prepared to abide by it, but are cooking up something else," is the conclusion of a fulmination from the Treasury.

And so the battle went on behind the scenes. Meanwhile it was going on in Parliament also. Lord George Hamilton initiated an attack on December 20, to which Harcourt replied in a long speech reviewing the naval situation in Europe, and analysing the causes of a scare which, he

argued, had no basis in the facts either as to the present or the future. "One of the fallacies by which the public mind has been abused," he said, "is the lumping together of ships which will not be finished for four years and treating them on a par with ships which will be finished in a month," and referring to the position in regard to France, he said :

. . . That is a statement which I believe, if it had been known to the British public, would have removed a great part of the alarm which has been created, and we should not have had to-night the statement of the right hon. gentleman that, if war were now declared against us, we should have to cut and run from the Mediterranean. How many battleships are the French going to have in the Mediterranean on the hypothesis of the right hon. gentleman that we should have to cut and run from those waters ? If they put eight there they will have only two in the Channel against our seven. It is only a question of distribution. But, whatever way you arrange the distribution, you will always be able to put two battleships to one of the French. (Oh !) Well, is that an arithmetical proposition ? . . .

As regards the future we mean to maintain the supremacy of the British navy ; we claim to watch and to examine and keep pace with the navies of the world. We hold as strongly as you do—as any man in this House can hold—that the greatness, the might, and the existence of England depends upon her navy and its supremacy. We are bound in the interests of this country to satisfy ourselves of the facts with reference to the supremacy, and not to go to the wild talk and misrepresentation, in my opinion, which has for some weeks very much abused the mind of the British public. I have stated to the House the facts as I have ascertained them. I have spared no pains in informing myself upon that subject. I believe that the facts I have laid before the House are facts which cannot be disputed. At all events, they come from the highest authority from which either the House or the Government could derive them.

Commenting on the debate in his report to the Queen (December 23), Harcourt pointed the familiar moral of these naval scares :

. . . It is interesting to observe that the scare which has been started in England has communicated itself to France, and that all the French newspapers with M. Clemenceau at their head are denouncing the inefficiency of the French navy quite as loudly as the English press is preaching alarm as to the English force. The result will probably be that both countries will expend large sums of money in terror of one another, and in the end their relative situation will remain the same. . . .

Harcourt's confident assurances were coldly received, as the following letter indicates :

*Ponsonby to Harcourt.*

OSBORNE, December 29.— . . . The Queen regrets to learn from you that there has been much misinterpretation on the subject of the navy, and regrets that the opportunity was not taken in the recent debate to clear these mistakes away. But they seem to have been made worse by the speeches.

• But the Queen is glad to observe that the Government are carefully considering what measures are necessary for maintaining the British supremacy at sea ; she trusts that she will before long be assured by you that some bold measures are immediately forthcoming.

The remark that " they seem to have been made worse by the speeches " was a direct rebuke to Harcourt. In his speech he had quoted " the professional advisers of the Admiralty " as his authority. It was a daring proceeding, for he was still " having it out " with the Admiralty, and he was instantly assailed in and out of Parliament for having misrepresented the " professional advisers," and charged with having received a protest from them in regard to his speech. He pointed out that he had claimed the support of the Naval Lords on the simple point of the relative forces of the various countries " in respect of first-class battleships completed within the financial year," and the text of his speech confirms this ; but the impression conveyed no doubt went further. Harcourt made his meaning clear in a personal statement the following day, and his assailants in the Press, unaccustomed to anything in the nature of an apology from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, promptly and joyously assumed the worst, declared that the Sea Lords had " all resigned in a body after the debate in the House," and that Harcourt had had to surrender to them.

II

The Sea Lords had not resigned ; but it was true that the tide of public panic was flowing too strong to be resisted. It was Harcourt's practice to fight to the last gasp with the

departments over the estimates, and then, having done his best, frankly to accept the situation and to defend them in the House as the representative of the Government whose decision had overruled the views of the Treasury. He was still engaged in his forlorn battle against the spending departments; but without hope of success. "The real mischief is the powerlessness of governments," he wrote to Campbell-Bannerman (January 19, 1894), "until the country smarting under an intolerable load of taxation takes the matter out of their hands and insists that a bit should be put in the mouths of the generals and admirals. We are actually in the condition of a householder whose weekly bills are at the mercy of a French *chef*, over whom he has no control." "I commend the enclosed article to your attention," he wrote to Spencer (January 22). "I have always suspected that the French programme was a sham, and I have no doubt that the admirals knew it to be so." "I always protest against insinuations of dishonesty on the part of the Admiralty," retorted Spencer (January 24), "and I now repeat my protest as to the tone of your short note."

But a more important dissident from the Admiralty proposals than Harcourt was now in the field. The *Journal* on January 4 reports "an acute crisis in Downing Street. Gladstone still persists in his determination to resign, nominally on the ground of failing faculties, but really on the navy." Harcourt was in the position at this moment of fighting on both flanks. While he was hurling his thunderbolts at the Admiralty on the ground of what he regarded as their extravagant claims, he was engaged in an argument with Gladstone to show that the amended proposals he had secured were less alarming than they might be, and that "on the whole, as far as I can ascertain, the actual increase on navy votes will be £1,500,000 above the average of the last five years, which is a very different thing from the £4,000,000 represented by Spencer, who took no account of the £2,000,000 now supplied out of the Consolidated Fund." Gladstone was not reassured. He wrote:

*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

10, DOWNING STREET, December 30, 1893.—I. Does not the amended view of the proposal come to this :

An *exceptional* expenditure having been proposed by the late Government to make up arrears and lay in a store for the future—and having been a good deal objected to for excess (as well as on financial grounds) by the Liberal Party—it is proposed to adopt a rate equal to the whole of that exceptional expenditure, and to add to it a million and a half ?

There ought really to be clear and intelligible figures from the Admiralty as a *preliminary* to any discussion on this subject.

Lastly, are you quite sure about the *average* of the last five years' value as the standard ?

There followed a characteristic correspondence between the two statesmen in which they bandied precedents and figures bearing on the situation. The letters were interspersed with meetings in which, as the Journal (January 6) records, Harcourt told Gladstone that if he resigned he would ruin the Liberal Party. "W. V. H. said he was as strongly opposed to Spencer's proposals as Gladstone himself, but that unfortunately Spencer, by his weakness, had irrevocably committed himself to his admirals, and as no other Board of Admiralty or First Lord could be got, we had to make the best of a bad job." [H.] But Gladstone was unmoved, and at a Cabinet meeting three days later practically announced his resignation if the Navy Estimates were persisted in and supported by the Cabinet. "He referred," says the Journal, "to the traditions he had held for forty years, his responsibility for combating the militarism of Europe, etc. ; the temptation given by a great navy to join European combinations, especially the Triple Alliance, etc." [H.]

After this meeting, and the clear evidence that the Cabinet were against him, the only question was whether it would be wiser for Gladstone to resign at once or delay until the next month or so. Mr. Morley, Mr. Asquith and Lord Rosebery left the Cabinet to consult together, and Mr. Morley has put it on record that "the view undoubtedly was that now is the accepted time for our Chief's

resignation." <sup>1</sup> He adds that at the House of Commons most of his Cabinet colleagues were for immediate retirement—in his own phrase were "this-weekers" rather than "next-monthers."

There are several touching glimpses in the Journal of the aged statesman in these days when he was engaged in the last phase of his public life. Thus :

. . . Mr. G. seems never to have told her (Mrs. Gladstone) the truth of the probability of his resignation, and last night made Mary Drew ask John Morley to dine at No. 10, saying, "He will explain the present situation to you," which he, J. M., had to do after dinner to Mrs. G. and Mary Drew in one corner of the room, while Mr. G. played backgammon in the other with Armitstead.

Gladstone told W. V. H. last night, almost with tears in his eyes, that he had suffered a great loss at Hawarden by the falling down in the recent gale of the two splendid beech trees in front of the house. [H.]

In the discussions of the "this-weekers" and "next-monthers," Harcourt was strongly for delay, urged Gladstone to reconsider his decision, and sent Lewis Harcourt to Lord Acton, who was about to accompany Gladstone to Biarritz, to prime him with the arguments which Harcourt thought would most effectively appeal to his Chief during his holiday reflections. Those reflections were troubled, as appears from this letter from E. W. Hamilton to Harcourt :

*E. W. Hamilton to Harcourt.*

TREASURY CHAMBERS, *January 29*.—I have seen Acton to-day, who has just arrived from Biarritz. He fully confirms what Algy West said as to Mr. G.'s great excitability and the fierceness of his mood ; and I understand that he won't admit the possibility of any change of mind. But there are considerations which make me think that the door is still ajar.

(1) He is apparently catching at straws, doubts the absolute unanimity of his colleagues against him and so forth.

(2) Precedents are, as you know, always dear to him ; and the precedent of 1859 is (I gather) what Mrs. G. would call "soaking."

(3) The family, now being frightened by the risk which his reputation would run if it came to his firing into the flank of his *quondam* colleagues, are now urging him at all cost to remain.

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections*, vol. ii, p. 2.

(4) The difficulties which he sees in telling only half or a quarter of the truth to the Queen are growing in his mind.

In the midst of his perturbations at Biarritz, the action of the House of Lords suggested to Gladstone a way out of his difficulties. The session begun a year before was still dragging on, and in January the Lords struck a deadly blow at the principle of the Employers' Liability Bill by adopting an amendment reserving to the workman individual freedom to contract himself out of the Bill and its benefits. They also mutilated the Parish Councils Bill. Harcourt went to Derby, and delivered a wrathful attack on the House of Lords. We had been too long, he said, a peer-ridden nation, and the time was at hand when the issue as to whether the Commons or the Lords should prevail must be tried, and he had no doubt about the result. He protested against the idea that the House of Lords should be able to force a popular referendum whenever they disagreed with the decision of the House of Commons. And, criticizing Chamberlain's support of the Tory opposition to Liberal measures, he quoted from that statesman's Denbigh speech of 1884, in which he asked, "Are you going to be governed by yourselves or will you submit to an oligarchy which is the mere accident of birth?" and declared that "the chronicles of the House of Lords are one long record of concessions delayed until they have lost their grace, of rights denied until extorted from their fears." Chamberlain retaliated at Birmingham (January 30) with characteristic acidity. Accepting Harcourt's designation of him as "a Radical whose Radical days had passed away," he said :

. . . Certainly, my Radicalism is not of Sir William Harcourt's stamp. I was a Radical when Sir William Harcourt was coquetting with the Tory Party and was believed, not I think without good reason, to be willing to take office under Mr. Disraeli. I continued to be a Radical when Sir William Harcourt became a moderate Whig and an arm-chair politician, and I remained a Radical when Sir William Harcourt was "stewing in Parnellite juice," but I have no sympathy at all with the new Radicalism, of which Sir William Harcourt is now a conspicuous supporter, though a recent convert.



. Harcourt replied in a rollicking speech to the National Liberal Federation at Portsmouth on February 14, in which he belaboured Chamberlain with his own unauthorized programme, and showed how he was now supporting the Lords in defeating it. He renewed his attack on the Lords, and roused the meeting to great enthusiasm. It was in this speech that he proclaimed the policy of "filling up the cup" in the following passage :

. . . The last fortnight's work in the House of Lords has marvellously opened the eyes of the people and advanced public opinion. Give them rope enough. Let us have a few more such fortnights ; let the handwriting on the wall be so clear that he who runs may read ; let it burn into the minds and consciences of the people that it is not upon one question, or upon two questions, or upon three questions, but upon all questions that the House of Lords is the champion of all abuses and the enemy of all reform. Let the object-lessons be many, let the moral be flagrant, let us send them up bill after bill—all these bills you see on the walls around you. Let them maul, mangle and mutilate, and defeat them, "for it is their nature to" ; and, then, when the cup is full, and the time is ripe, the verdict of the people shall be taken on the general issue, and they shall determine once for all whether the whisper of faction is to prevail over the will of the people.

In one respect he disappointed his audience. He did not declare for an immediate appeal to the country. "The meeting waited for the signal to go for the Lords, and this they did not get," said one commentator in the Press.

What the meeting did not know was that from Biarritz Gladstone had given the signal, and that it had been turned down by his colleagues. In his perplexity he had seized on the mutilation of the Government bills by the Lords as a means of escape. Let there be a dissolution, and an appeal to the country against the House of Lords on their recent aggressions. That would give the Party any prestige which his name supplied for the purposes of an election, and enable him to retire from the field afterwards without the appearance of disagreement with his colleagues. The idea was emphatically rejected, and Gladstone, checked in this direction, returned to carry out his resignation. Meanwhile the news that he was contemplating retirement had

got into the Press, and had been the subject of a diplomatic denial. "It hardly needed your contradiction," wrote Harcourt. "Indeed I feel sure that the Liberal Party would not credit it even on your own authority, so impossible does it seem to all of us that we should exist without you at our head." But he knew that the end had come, and that the confirmation of the *Pall Mall Gazette's* "outrageous canard" was only a question of a few days.

## CHAPTER XV

### ROSEBERY OR HARCOURT

Harcourt's record—Lord Rosebery's popularity—Gladstone's Resignation delayed—His preference for Spencer—Mr. Morley's attitude—Gives his voice for Lord Rosebery—Difficulty of a Liberal Peer Premier—Harcourt agrees to work with Rosebery—His tribute to Gladstone.

**H**ARCOURT had abundant reason to know how solid the basis was for the "outrageous canard," for throughout the past month, following on Gladstone's announcement to the Cabinet of his refusal to endorse the naval estimates, the inner counsels of the Party had been seething with one question—who was to succeed? That question had been debated for twenty years past, ever since Gladstone's temporary retirement after the defeat of 1874. Throughout that time, and even at that time, Harcourt had been among the obvious competitors for the succession. He had been a great parliamentary figure before most of those who were now his colleagues were in the House. He had seen a long line of possible successors to the leadership of the Party pass away from the field, either by death or disagreement. In the country his popularity was inferior only to that of Gladstone himself, and in the House of Commons there was, again apart from Gladstone, no one on the Liberal side with anything approaching his parliamentary gifts. It was said that he was insincere. That is a charge which few public men escape, and it would be idle to deny that in the long and combative career he had lived in the public eye he had sometimes given apparent ground for the suspicion. His record on Ireland—to take a conspicuous case—was at least as

equivocal as that of Chamberlain, though it was more defensible on the plea which he always advanced that the negotiations of the Conservatives with the Parnellites in 1885 had made coercion as a policy no longer tenable. His conversion to Home Rule was due to practical considerations rather than to the compulsion of fundamental ideas, but in this respect it did not differ from the conversion of many others, including many Conservatives who, brought into contact with the facts of Ireland, changed their view as to the relations of the two countries.

But making the utmost allowance for the criticisms that could be fairly made against him in this and other cases, it remains true that, seen in the large, Harcourt's public career had been singularly disinterested and honest. He had broken as a young man with the political traditions of his family, and had proclaimed at Cambridge nearly fifty years before much the same views that he now held. He had refused the temptation held out to him to become a *protégé* of the great Whig magnates, and had preferred to earn his own living and secure his own independence before he entered upon a public career. He was over forty before he went into Parliament, and when he accepted office he surrendered one of the most valuable practices at the Bar for a calling which, taking his career as a whole, hardly provided him with the income of a head clerk. And to that calling he had brought powers of the highest order which he had applied with an industry and an enthusiasm, of which even this long record of his activities gives only an inadequate appreciation. His loyalty to his Party was unquestioned, and his loyalty to a certain fundamental philosophy of affairs which represented to him the bedrock ideas of the Liberal faith was equally unquestionable.

Whether from the point of view of opinions, capacity or experience, therefore, the title of Harcourt to succeed Gladstone seemed unchallenged so far as the House of Commons was concerned. It was in the House of Lords that his real rival was to be found. Lord Rosebery was, of course, a much younger man than Harcourt. He had

first come into prominence in connection with Gladstone's Midlothian campaign in 1880, and though his public record was slight compared with that of Harcourt, he was richly endowed with those qualities which touch the popular imagination. He was the Prince Charming of politics, who came into the rather drab arena of affairs trailing a cloud of romantic possibilities in his wake. The good fairies had been surprisingly lavish in bringing their gifts to his cradle. They had supplied him with wealth that placed him far outside the pale of vulgar competition. They had given him a quick, apprehensive mind, a rare quality of eloquence and a delicate wit. He had that elusive quality which we describe vaguely as personality, a certain touch of mystery or magic that singles a man out from the mob and compels attention whether we like or dislike him, trust or distrust him. He was none the less popular with Liberals because he possessed in an unusual degree the tastes and graces which traditionally belonged to the Tories. He disarmed the enemy by the royal authority with which he challenged them on their own ground. He was a connoisseur and a sportsman, a courtier and a man of fashion. He could turn his hand to any task with a facile accomplishment that never failed to give it distinction. He kept the public mind alive with agreeable expectancy. He fascinated it by the variety of his gifts and a certain incalculable waywardness of temperament. Popular opinion had attributed to him the triple ambition of marrying the richest heiress in England, winning the Derby and becoming Prime Minister, and, though the attribution probably did him an injustice, it reflected the public feeling in regard to this favourite of fortune. He had added largely to his prestige in recent years by accepting the chairmanship of the new London County Council, and working at the task with conspicuous industry and enthusiasm. But he had grave disqualifications for the succession to the Liberal leadership. He had never sat in the House of Commons, and the growing hostility between the two Houses had increased the Liberal feeling against a Prime Minister

who was in the Upper Chamber. His Liberalism was more than a little touched with Imperialism, and there was already visible in him an instability of purpose which made his action incalculable. If Harcourt blew hot, Lord Rosebery was apt to blow hot and cold. During the formation of the Government he had been as difficult to entrap as a startled hare, and had apparently only surrendered in the end out of sheer weariness of fleeing from the pursuit.

When the retirement of Gladstone became imminent, it was evident that the question of the succession would arouse great feeling. If the decision had rested with the rank and file of the party in the country or with the majority of the Party in the House of Commons there is little doubt that the overwhelming claims which Harcourt's services and record constituted would have secured him the succession. But the decision rested with Harcourt's colleagues in the Government, and sensible as they were of his title they were equally sensible of the difficulties of his temper. Most of them had smarted under the whip of his formidable tongue and not less formidable pen, and his uncalculating emphasis in controversy took no account of consequences. He bore no malice, at once forgot his quarrels, and gurgled with great laughter as soon as the storm had passed. But other men remembered, and were less ready to forgive than he was to forget. Harcourt was perfectly aware of the feeling against him and of the cause. In the midst of the crisis the Journal records (February 21) :

I dined with the Spencers at the Admiralty to-night, and walked away from there with Lord Acton, who said that "remarkable though it would seem to every one, Gladstone, if asked by the Queen for advice, will not recommend her to send for W. V. H., but probably suggest that Kimberley should advise her further as Leader in the Lords."

Acton said : " Your father is not good at making friends."

I replied : " On the contrary he has a facility for making enemies."

Acton added : " And even apparently a malicious delight in doing so." [H.]

At this time Harcourt was still urging Gladstone to withhold his resignation. There had been a Cabinet dinner

at 10, Downing Street on February 17, at which the "This-weekers" of the pre-Biarritz days expected to hear the definitive announcement of retirement, but still Gladstone gave no sign. The Journal records :

10.45 *p.m.*—The dreaded dinner is over, and nothing has happened ! After the servants had left the room ministers made constant pauses in the general conversation to allow Gladstone to commence any statement he had to make, but he never did so. Herschell sat on one side of Gladstone and Rosebery on the other. W. V. H. was opposite to him between Kimberley and Arnold Morley ; no names were put on the places, and no one was instructed where to sit, so everything was more or less haphazard. The table was beautifully decorated with snowdrops. Oysters were served in spite of Gladstone's dislike of them, but this was because he had just had a present of a barrel of them from admirers at Colchester. *Mirabile dictu* cigarettes were handed round after dinner, but W. V. H. cannot remember whether any one smoked them ; he did not, nor did he drink the wine. J. Morley asked W. V. H. what he thought of the affair. W. V. H. replied, " I feel as I did at the Home Office when a high sheriff told me he had three times tried to hang a man and failed, and I had to go down to the H. of C. and say that the man deserved to be hanged, but I had relieved him." (This was the case of Lee at Babbacombe.)

W. V. H. stayed behind after the dinner, and had a long and friendly talk with Gladstone about his sight. He pressed him to go to see Pagenstecker, saying, " If I had believed the English oculists and not gone to Pagenstecker I should have had a glass eye for three years or more." [H.]

Four days later when Harcourt was protesting against Gladstone's retirement at this moment, Gladstone interrupted, " Not retirement ! I have been put out." On the 24th the Journal records :

W. V. H. said in the course of his conversation with Gladstone— " We are like the sailor on Palinurus's ship in the storm." " Yes," replied Mr. G., " and Palinurus has been thrown overboard."

It was not until February 23 that Gladstone made the formal announcement to the Cabinet that he would resign. The question of his successor had taken definite shape before the end came, and Lord Rosebery was clearly emerging as the choice of the Cabinet. The opposition to him was formidable in the Radical wing of the Party, which had no

enthusiasm for him personally and was bitterly resentful of the idea of a Liberal Prime Minister in the House of Lords. Nor were the Irish any more friendly, for Lord Rosebery's record on Home Rule was indeterminate and chilly. But neither Radical opinion nor Irish preferences had much voice in the matter, and the tide was flowing definitely in the direction of a Rosebery leadership. Harcourt himself knew this, and was prepared for it. As early as the beginning of January the Journal records :

Late this evening, W. V. H. said to me, " If Mr. G. goes the Queen will either send for Salisbury or Rosebery." I interrupted him saying, " She will probably send for Rosebery ; he will accept her invitation to form a Government, and ask you to serve under him. What will you do ? " He replied, " What can I do but say ' Yes.' How can I allow it to be thought and said by our people that I allowed what I considered my personal claims and interest to stand in the way of the continuance of the Liberal Party in power ? "

I tried to argue against this view feebly for a time, but knowing that it is the right and only possible one. It will be a splendid sacrifice if it has to be made, and it will be easier for him than it will for me. He has hardly any ambition ; I have a double dose for him. [H.]

It was true. But Harcourt, anxious though he was to please his son, was resolute in his decision to take office under Lord Rosebery if it became necessary, rather than risk disaster to the Party. In any case, he said, the Government would not last long, and it might as well go to pieces under Lord Rosebery as under himself. He remarked that he would not have it said to him by the Party that he had prevented or made difficult the formation of a new Government by standing aside on a personal question. Moreover it was better that people should ask why one was not in a certain place than why one was. He made no movement to press his claims, and told Mr. Morley, says Lewis Harcourt, " that his chief interest in the matter was that I should not be disappointed after devoting so much of my life to that object and having abandoned so much else that I might have done for his sake and in his interests." Nor did Lord Rosebery show any more apparent eagerness. The Journal



records conversations with Mr. Reginald Brett and E. W. Hamilton, both of whom had seen Lord Rosebery and had found him willing to serve under Harcourt on certain terms, but "there were other difficulties, which (says the Journal) of course means Morley."

## II

Both father and son knew that the key of the situation was in Mr. Morley's keeping, and that he had reacted from Harcourt to Lord Rosebery. Next to Harcourt himself, Mr. Morley was easily the most influential figure on the Liberal side in the House of Commons, and if he had led the movement in favour of a Harcourt leadership no other combination would have been able to resist it. His secession to the Rosebery group made the result a foregone conclusion. He himself records <sup>1</sup> the following conversation with Gladstone :

J. M. If I were in your place, considering the difficulties and embarrassments of personal questions, I should be disposed to decline advice.

Mr. G. No, I could not do that. It would not be consistent with my view of my duty not to advise if invited.

J. M. Then I am bound to say that, though it is not ideal, and has many elements of danger to policies that you and I care for, I should advise Rosebery.

Mr. G. I shall advise Spencer.<sup>2</sup>

On the face of it, Mr. Morley's support of Lord Rosebery is not easily intelligible. He shared the Liberal dislike of a Prime Minister who sat in the House of Lords. On most questions that had arisen on external policy, Egypt and Uganda for example, he was in sympathy with Harcourt rather than with Lord Rosebery. He was no less hostile than Harcourt himself to the Imperialist tendencies which were expanding in the Liberal Party under the inspiration

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections*, vol. ii. p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Gladstone's mind wavered between Kimberley and Spencer. He was entirely hostile to a Rosebery leadership. He had been in acute disagreement with some of his tendencies on foreign politics. As a matter of fact he was not consulted by the Queen as to his successor.

of Lord Rosebery. Nor on the question of Ireland, which chiefly bound him to public affairs, did Lord Rosebery's attitude provide a ground of confidence. Harcourt, with whatever original questionings, had committed himself to Home Rule beyond the possibility of turning back, while Lord Rosebery, as events soon showed, had little heart in the business.

It was not enthusiasm for a Rosebery policy, therefore, which explains Mr. Morley's action. It was definite hostility to Harcourt as head of the Government. This attitude represented an entire reversal of feeling on the subject. Throughout the years of Opposition the two statesmen had been in the closest intercourse. Their friendship had been almost uninterrupted, their correspondence constant and cordial, their agreement on affairs conspicuously free from serious disturbance. Nothing seemed less likely than a breach between them. But co-operation in opposition, where the main interest is attack on a common enemy, is much easier than co-operation in office with all its clash of conflicting motives and policies, and the political friendship that seemed so enduring promptly succumbed to the ordeal. It was probably bound to succumb. Harcourt was rough, and Mr. Morley was sensitive. Harcourt hit hard and thoughtlessly, and forgot all about it; Mr. Morley winced and remembered. He had shared the suspicion of the so-called " Brook Street Conferences " which Harcourt had held on the formation of the Government, he had felt that Harcourt was unhelpful on Home Rule, and he had bitterly resented the letter which Harcourt had sent to Gladstone on the morning of the introduction of the Home Rule Bill. Since the last-named incident Mr. Morley had been noticeably cold, and the familiar and frequent letters between the two had practically ceased. Mr. Morley had taken his line with a clear sense of the weight of Harcourt's claim to the leadership, and in his *Recollections*<sup>1</sup> expresses himself very candidly in regard both to those claims and to the reasons for which those claims were passed by.

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections*, vol. ii. p. 11.

Harcourt has left no record of his view of his colleague, but in the Journal (January 13) there is this passage:

I had a talk late to-night with W. V. H. over the John Morley situation. He said he did not mind the temporary ill-feeling which is engendered from time to time by the strenuous discussions in Cabinet, but what he feels a good deal is the fact that J. M. treasures up all these little incidents long after he (W. V. H.) has forgotten them and that they influence his subsequent views of men and affairs and also of public policy. . . . [H.]

There were many friendly but very frank talks between the two, in one of which Mr. Morley says<sup>1</sup> he mentioned Harcourt's lack of "prudence and patience." "Oh, I know," said Harcourt; "but you must blame nature; *tamen usque recurret*," to which Mr. Morley replied, "I don't presume to blame either gods or demi-gods. But business is business; and, as some sage has observed, Nature says, take all, but pay." Harcourt insisted that he did not want to be head of the Government, but was determined that wherever the titular leader was, the reality of authority must be in the House of Commons, but Mr. Morley replied:

My dear Harcourt, forgive me for being frank. But you deceive yourself. You do want to be leader. You are a proud man. You are aristocrat to your finger-tips. People may say *stemmata quid faciunt* if they like, but your *stemma* interests you immensely. (What is the use of genealogies?) Quite right too. You have had a Chancellor in your family, and a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and you'd like to have a Prime Minister in your family, and no earthly blame to you. The thing for us and for the Party has a double aspect, how we can best carry on our fight in the House of Commons between now and the dissolution, and how we can offer the best front when the election comes. From the first point of view you are nothing less than indispensable; from the second, the advantages are with Rosebery.

Whether Harcourt was ambitious is an idle question. No man endowed with Harcourt's powers, conscious of his achievements, sensible of the commanding place he had established among his fellows, could fail to desire the recog-

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections*, vol. ii. p. 14.

nition which he had so conspicuously earned. If he was ambitious it was certainly in no unworthy sense, and it would be difficult to find a case in which an aspirant for high office took less pains to promote his candidature or invited defeat by a more careless indifference to the small arts by which support is purchased. He hurt the sensibilities of his colleagues, and had no skill in making terms with the Press. So far from flattering it, he habitually derided it, and no public man of his time had fewer friends or more numerous and implacable enemies in the Press than he had. When the crisis came he was almost entirely deserted by the Liberal newspapers, which either dismissed his claims openly, or, as in the case of the *Daily News* and the *Westminster Gazette*, appealed to him to perform hari-kari and win for himself a deathless name. It was only when the struggle was over that one at least of the newspapers became conscious of the injustice with which he had been treated. In an article on March 7 the *Westminster Gazette* said :

. . . The Liberal Party owe a great debt to Sir William Harcourt, and the rapidity with which, in the Liberal Press, his succession to Mr. Gladstone was discounted is an ugly slur upon political gratitude. Among the leaders of the Liberal Party of 1880 he alone stood by Mr. Gladstone in 1885. All through the year of depression he cheerfully bore the brunt of battle. Insults not a few, social humiliations which gall a proud man, calumny and abuse were all disregarded with an appearance of manly cheerfulness, which was all the more creditable as it could not possibly have been genuine. In recent years, too, no one has fought for the Liberal Party so consistently and with such unflagging zeal as the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It seems and cannot help seeming a desertion on the part of the Radical Press to clamour for another to lead them, were he forty thousand times over the better man. . . . A party which affects to despise Imperial England, noble birth, wealth, station, intellect—in short everything which distinguishes the classes from the masses—has rushed into the arms of a leader who combines all these great and secretly adored qualities, to the exclusion of the man who has attached undue importance to the frothy clamour of democracy.

There was strong sympathy with Harcourt's claim on both sides of the House of Commons, of whose traditions and prestige he had been so powerful a defender. This

sentiment was reflected in *The Times* of March 1, in a leader commenting on the support accorded to the candidature of Lord Rosebery in the Liberal Press :

. . . He (Harcourt) has borne the burden and heat of the day in party strife, both in the House of Commons and on the platform, ever since he went out of office in 1886. He is a powerful and ready master of a vigorous rhetoric and a pleasant vein of humour. . . . With all his faults, Sir William Harcourt, when Mr. Gladstone is gone, will be much more than a match, in debating power and in parliamentary knowledge, for any of his ministerial colleagues in the lower House. It would not be surprising if he were to resent a scheme for shunting him into a secondary position after many years of active service, both in office and in opposition. To be told that "a higher place may yet be his," when he is asked to acquiesce in the leadership of a man twenty years his junior, is, he may feel not unreasonably, to add insult to injury. But, apart from this personal question, and the use a considerable section of the Radicals may make of it, there has been an unexpected unanimity among the Gladstonian newspapers of all shades in the approval of Lord Rosebery's selection for the eventual leadership of the Party.

But if Harcourt cannot fairly be accused of any excessive ambition in the matter, there was a devouring ambition on his behalf. Mr. Morley describes <sup>1</sup> the visits he received from an emissary "in many ways cleverer, neater, more astute, diplomatic, and far more resolute than Harcourt himself." It was Lewis Harcourt, whose passion for his father was as remarkable as his suppression of himself. He had given ten years of his life for one chief purpose, to make his father Prime Minister, and this was, he saw, Harcourt's Waterloo. Now or never. He tried to induce Harcourt, if the worst came to the worst, to refuse office under any other Prime Minister, and when he failed in this he turned all his diplomatic art upon Mr. Morley. Two years before, when it had become apparent that the only real alternative to Harcourt was Lord Rosebery, he had received an assurance from Mr. Morley at Malwood that he would support Harcourt as against Lord Rosebery for the leadership, and he now sought the fulfilment of that understanding. The Journal records frequent con-

<sup>1</sup> *Recollections*, vol. ii. p. 16.

versations in which Mr. Morley gave the reasons for his change of feeling. The general effect of these was that he could not work under Harcourt and "possibly not with him." He admitted that Lord Rosebery excited no enthusiasm in the country, "but he does excite interest and curiosity. He is a peer, with great wealth, an air of mystery, an affectation of literature, and is probably going to win the Derby." He said that "all the Cabinet in the H. of C. with the possible exception of Asquith and Acland (not alluding to himself) were in favour of W. V. H. as P.M., and that probably the four peers would be in favour of Rosebery." This was assumed to give a majority of one for Lord Rosebery. The Journal represents Mr. Morley as modifying his position towards the end ; <sup>1</sup> but the situation had now developed too far to be affected, and when Gladstone's last Cabinet met on March 1 to take farewell of the old leader the

<sup>1</sup> The Journal, under date March 3, says :

Morley reports Rosebery as saying : " You people put me up on a pinnacle and then tell me I am to have no voice in any decisions. I am not to nominate the Leader of the House of Commons, whom you have chosen for me ; I am not to select my successor at the Foreign Office ; in fact I am to settle nothing and be a mere cypher. If that is the case I had better remain at the F.O. myself and you can make Harcourt Prime Minister."

I asked Morley if he understood that W. V. H.'s conditions were generally accepted by Rosebery, and he replied : " Yes, fully, with the exception of the disputed point about the F.O. communications. . . ."

W. V. H. dined to-night with Kimberley for the pricking of the Sheriffs and drove there in Gladstone's brougham with him. He returned at 11, bringing Gladstone in his, W. V. H.'s brougham. . . .

W. V. H. had sat next to J. Morley at dinner ; found him in a great rage with Rosebery, who he considers has tricked him over the Foreign Secretary being in the Lords. He said to W. V. H., " Ah, it is a great pity our combination was broken up." W. V. H. incensed him still more by pointing out that now he (J. M.) had ceased to be useful to R., his advice and opinions were discarded. W. V. H. said, " Faults of *brusquerie* may be less objectionable than faults of 'intrigue,' " and reminded him of the fable of the horse which allowed a man to mount him in order to pursue a stag, but when they had run down the stag, the man refused to dismount. J. Morley left Kimberley's swearing he would not join the Government and would send another ultimatum in the morning, etc. The situation is delightful to me, for J. M. is *the* man who has deprived W. V. H. of the first place and now finds himself discarded and of no importance. . . . [H.]

succession of Lord Rosebery was pretty well assured. The Radicals, however, were still hostile, and on the same day sent a deputation headed by Labouchere and Samuel Storey to the Chief Whip to oppose a Prime Minister in the House of Lords.

The difficulties of that arrangement were already beginning to loom large. Harcourt had drawn up a memorandum on the subject of the position and authority of the Leader of the House of Commons in the case of the Prime Minister being in the House of Lords. This he had discussed with Mr. Morley and other colleagues from February 24 onwards, with the result that an amended scheme of "conditions" (Appendix IV) was drawn up by him. On March 3 Lord Rosebery announced to his colleagues that the Queen had asked him to form a Government, and that he had undertaken to attempt the task. He saw Harcourt that evening, and invited him to become Leader of the House of Commons. The discussion between them turned upon the conditions referred to and chiefly upon the conduct of foreign affairs. Lord Rosebery was determined to be a real Prime Minister or not a Prime Minister at all, and Harcourt was determined that the authority of the House of Commons should not be diminished in the vital sphere of foreign affairs. The discussion was entirely amicable, but inconclusive, Harcourt asking for time to consult Mr. Morley. He also communicated with Gladstone on the subject of precedents in his experience, and Gladstone replied (March 4) that "the general upshot is that I was made habitually privy in the time of Clarendon and Granville to the ideas as well as the business of the Foreign Ministry, and in consequence the business of that department, if and when introduced to the Cabinet, came before it with a joint support as a general rule." That afternoon (March 4), without having seen Mr. Morley, Harcourt again met Lord Rosebery. He has left a record of the two interviews in the following memorandum:

11, DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL, *March 3, 1894.*—Lord Rosebery came to see me at 6.30 p.m. to-day, and informed me that he

had the Queen's commission to form a Government on the resignation of Mr. Gladstone. After many civil observations referring to myself and a good deal of deprecation of his own fitness for the post of Prime Minister he proposed to me to take the position of Leader of the House of Commons in the new Government. He said that as regards Mr. Labouchere's view of the situation there was nothing logically to be said against it ; that the whole machinery of Government was in the House of Commons ; and that it was next door to an absurdity to endeavour to conduct it from the House of Lords.

I did not follow this up but proceeded at once to say that in my opinion it was the duty of all members of the late Government and the Party to co-operate in any position in which they could be most useful, and that I was perfectly prepared to act in that spirit.

A good deal of general conversation took place upon the situation. Lord Rosebery stated that of course a Prime Minister in the House of Lords was mainly dependent upon the support of the Leader of the House of Commons. I indicated that the fact of the Prime Minister being in the House of Lords necessitated a large freedom of action on the part of the Leader of the House of Commons to deal with emergencies as they arose. I had in my hand the memorandum which I had previously drawn up, and read to Mr. Marjoribanks and Mr. John Morley. [The Memorandum of March 2, given as Appendix IV to this volume.]

I did not read it *in extenso* to Lord Rosebery for I knew he was aware of its contents, and did not desire to have the appearance of formally imposing conditions.

The question of consultation in respect of appointments was also mentioned, and no difficulty raised on that subject. The only real difficulty which arose in the conversation was in regard to the relation of the House of Commons to the conduct of foreign affairs. I stated that, in my opinion, the conjunction of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords created a very grave difficulty ; that Mr. Gladstone with the entire concurrence of the whole Party had strongly condemned the arrangement that united those offices in the person of Lord Salisbury.

So far as the House of Commons were concerned, it came to the same thing whether those offices were in two persons or one person, both being in the House of Lords ; that the issue of peace and war depended upon the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the First Lord of the Admiralty, and that these three offices, together with the Colonies, would now be in the House of Lords ; that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs ought to be in the House of Commons, so that he might speak with all the authority of his office ; and that the Leader of the House of Commons should have constant opportunities of communication with him. Lord Rosebery did not directly



dispute any of these propositions, but he stated that he gave up the Foreign Office with great reluctance; that in doing so he felt an obligation to appoint to that place the person he considered best suited for it; that he regarded Lord Kimberley as the fittest man for the place; and that he did not see any person in the House of Commons who was so suitable for it. I said I regarded the matter as of such grave importance that I must reserve my opinion upon it, and could not agree to any arrangement of the sort without further consideration. Our interview then ended.

*March 4, Sunday.*—This morning early I wrote a note to Lord Rosebery saying I desired to see him to-day to come to some settlement on the disputed point of the House of Commons and foreign affairs. He replied that he would be glad to see me, but that he could not consent to any conditions which would impair the established position of the Prime Minister. I went to Lord Rosebery's house at 1 o'clock. I told him the question was not one of impairing the position of the Prime Minister, but of strengthening the hands of the Leader of the House of Commons. He replied, "The Leader of the House of Commons is already far the stronger power of the two." I told him that apart from his condition as a peer I admitted Lord Kimberley to be the fittest person for the purpose, and that I could not designate any special person in the House of Commons to occupy the post. The point therefore to be considered was how assuming Lord Kimberley to go to the Foreign Office the Leader of the House of Commons might be secured in that privy to all that was taking place in foreign affairs, in which it was essential that he should have a voice. I said that I was of opinion that the Foreign Secretary should communicate as fully and freely with the Leader of the House of Commons as he did with the Prime Minister. To this Lord Rosebery agreed, and it was understood that I should communicate with Lord Kimberley for the purpose of giving effect to this object, so that the Leader of the House of Commons should have notice not only when foreign affairs reached a crisis but *ab initio* when affairs were beginning at all to "creak."

I told him that I knew John Morley, Campbell-Bannerman, Arnold Morley and Edward Marjoribanks took an equally strong view of the Foreign Office question.

We then passed on to a general discussion relating to changes and appointments, but no final decision was arrived at on these points.<sup>1</sup>

With the apparent agreement in regard to the Foreign Office, the serious difficulties in regard to the constitution of the reorganized Cabinet disappeared. Harcourt had taken

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Morley was on this day evidently under the impression that Harcourt had surrendered the point of the controversy on the Foreign Secretaryship.

service under a new chief. If he had entertained, as we may suppose he had, the not ignoble desire to fill the highest office in the State, he could entertain it no more. He was a man of sixty-seven who had enlisted under a new leader who was twenty years his junior, and the path of advance was closed to him finally. Among the rank and file of the Party in the country, who knew nothing of the situation behind the scenes, the announcement came as a surprise, and was received with some resentment. The general feeling was expressed by one of Harcourt's most distinguished colleagues in the House, Horace Davey, who wrote :

. . . I know your loyalty and devotion to the Party too well to suppose that you would wish your friends to assume any dissatisfaction on your part with recent political arrangements. But you must allow me from the serene atmosphere of my shelf to express my own disappointment that one who has done so much for his Party as you have does not lead it as Prime Minister.

No doubt however all things are for the best in the best of all possible republics.

Sir Charles Dilke, writing in the *North American Review* (May 1894), on "Lord Rosebery's Administration," said :

. . . So strong was the outside hostility to the choice of any peer, and the outside feeling in favour of Sir William Harcourt as leader, so general the previous belief that Sir William Harcourt would at least be offered the reversion, should he be thought to desire (contrary, perhaps, to his personal interest) to assume the post, that the sudden selection of Lord Rosebery by the Queen, at the suggestion of Mr. Gladstone after consultation with his Cabinet,<sup>1</sup> came as a surprise to the Liberal Party in the country. Those in the House of Commons who know most of what is passing, had, since November, been aware that the sudden substitution of Lord Rosebery for Mr. Gladstone was in contemplation, but those among them who were opposed to this substitution, and who would have preferred the leadership of Sir William Harcourt, were in this difficulty : that the Liberal constituencies would have resented any movement pointing towards the selection of Sir William Harcourt by the Party, as being ungenerous towards Mr. Gladstone, who was still at its head, and not admittedly about to quit the lead. Sir William Harcourt himself would also have been placed by any such public movement in the

<sup>1</sup> This belief, generally held at the time, was, as we now know, incorrect.

had been a meeting of the Liberal members at the Foreign Office to welcome the new Prime Minister and the new Leader of the House of Commons. The occasion was one of unusual interest. For weeks past public attention had been centred on the battle for the leadership, and the air was filled with rumours of the heart-burnings and soreness that the incident had left behind. The Party in the House of Commons, which had strongly favoured a Harcourt leadership, had accepted the results with some resentment, and there was an undercurrent of anger at the suspicion that the commanding claims of a great House of Commons man had been undermined by a cabal. It was even suggested, quite unjustly as the facts show, that Lord Rosebery owed his position to court influence. Harcourt's bearing at this time did much to calm party feeling. It was well described by the distinguished American correspondent, G. W. Smalley, who, writing to the *New York Tribune*, April 1, 1894, said :

. . . Never was a better opportunity to judge Sir William Harcourt than during these recent weeks. He had undergone a bitter mortification, the ambition of his political life baffled as it seemed within his grasp. But if you had met him in the first days of this chagrin, you would have found him in his most admirable mood, cordial and sunny to all the world, and in his very best form, as society says. Society watched him curiously in these circumstances, and paid him the honourable tribute due to an undisturbed demeanour, to faculties which shone their brightest in this hour of lasting disappointment, and to a cheerful heroism of which only a fine character is capable.

Having taken the subordinate position, he threw himself into the task of making the new Government a success with every appearance of goodwill, and his letters to his new Chief were full of helpfulness and even ardour. Thus, on the Address, in reference to which some opposition was taken in high quarters, he wrote to Lord Rosebery (March 9, midnight) :

. . . I highly approve the position you have taken up, and will stand by you to the last.

It is impossible on such a matter to give way an inch. It is incon-

ceivable that having consented to the speech in 1893 which included Home Rule, and also the Welsh and Scotch Church, an objection should now be taken.

In my opinion it is a stand or fall business.

He entered into friendly correspondence with Mr. Balfour, for whom he always entertained a keen personal liking, in regard to "a suspension of arms until March 31," in order to get parliamentary affairs, driven "into a corner" by the previous long session and the crisis, out of the tangle.

If there was any expectation that he would show that he nursed a grievance it was removed at the Party meeting where his reception was markedly enthusiastic, and where, following Lord Rosebery, he made an inspiring speech that sent the Party across Whitehall to St. Stephen's in good heart and relieved in mind. But the day did not pass without trouble. In his speech at the Foreign Office Lord Rosebery had said that Home Rule would be "pressed to the forefront, and, as far as in me lies, pressed to a definite and successful conclusion." This attitude was endorsed by Harcourt, who also declared for the full redemption of the Newcastle programme. But in the House of Lords that afternoon, Lord Rosebery, after a tribute to Gladstone, made a remark which "raised the waters" in the adjoining Chamber, and echoed for many a long day. Referring to Home Rule, he said :

. . . The noble Marquess (Salisbury) made one remark on the subject of Home Rule with which I confess myself in entire accord. He said that before Home Rule is conceded by the Imperial Parliament, England, as the predominant member of the partnership of the three kingdoms, will have to be convinced of its justice. That may seem to be a considerable admission to make, because your lordships well know that the majority of members of Parliament, elected from England proper, are hostile to Home Rule.

The *faux pas*, which was welcomed next morning by the Unionist Press with shouts of triumph, created profound indignation among the Irishmen. Mr. Morley did his best in the House of Commons next day to explain away the too sinister meaning that had been put on the speech.

But the mischief was done, and Labouchere, seizing' with impish delight on the opportunity offered, moved an amendment to the Address next day in favour of the abolition of the veto of the House of Lords. In a snatch division and with the help of the Welsh and the Irish, he defeated the Government by two votes. It was a humiliating experience, and Lord Rosebery knew that it was the reply to his speech of the previous day. Harcourt knew it also. Writing to Gladstone in answer to a letter of "comfort and aid in our difficulty" (the Speakership), he said :

. . . The situation in the House of Commons was yesterday a very bad one. Rosebery's unfortunate sentence about Home Rule had greatly exasperated the Irish, and of course J. Redmond made the worst of it.

Labby manœuvred to get his amendment on just before dinner when many of our best men were paired with the Tories. He intrigued with a lot of the Tories to go out, and our men who remained behind thought they could vote as they pleased and that there was no danger. . . .

The situation was both awkward and ludicrous. It could only be met by negating the whole Address and substituting a new one. This was done, and, writing to the Queen at Florence, Harcourt said that "all parties were glad to escape from a situation which had arisen more from accident than design. For the present at least matters are tranquil, but Sir William is not disposed to prophesy with any confidence as to the future." The Queen was greatly angered by the incident, and sent to the new Prime Minister a letter of unusual asperity, which was reflected in very much milder terms in the following letter from her private secretary to Harcourt :

VILLA FABBRICOTTI, FLORENCE, *March* 19, 1894.—The Queen is much distressed at the *contretemps* in the House of Commons when the Government were defeated on a question relating to the House of Lords.

She considers a Second House to be a necessity in a free country, and the presence in Parliament of an independent body of men who have no need of being afraid of the clamour of a noisy set of constituents who represent no party but only a temporary excitement is a most valuable and important body in a state.

Harcourt replied (March 22) that he regretted as much as the Queen could do that the Government had been beaten on any question ; but added significantly, " There are some questions, however, on which the Liberal Party will ' gang its ain gait ' in spite of all Governments and all Whips, and the House of Lords is one of them." By this time the *contretemps* had been lived down, and the new Government was well under way, but the stumble on the threshold was ominous, and the speech that largely caused it had planted the seeds of distrust and disintegration in the alliance that alone kept the Ministry in power.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE DEATH DUTIES BUDGET

Preparation of the Budget—A Memorandum to Lord Rosebery—Another Difference with Lord Rosebery—Friendly Reception of the Budget—A Revolt of Beer—The Chatsworth Estate—A Protest from the Queen—Skilful Management in Committee—Congratulations from all Quarters—"Filling Up the Cup"—The Coburg Annuity—Mr. Gladstone on Local Option—A Holiday in Italy.

**H**ARCOURT touched the zenith of his career in the Session of 1894. The highest prize within his reach had just passed away from him finally, but he made the first year of his leadership of the House of Commons memorable by an achievement which gave his reputation a more enduring significance than the tenure of the Premiership alone would have done. Prime Ministers are often only vague shadows in the field of history, and I have seen a generally well-informed company unable to supply the name of the Prime Minister who was in office at the time of the battle of Waterloo, although that Prime Minister held the position continuously longer than any Prime Minister in history except Sir Robert Walpole. Harcourt would not have been a vague shadow in any office ; but his place in the political annals of the country as the author of the Budget of 1894 would not have been substantially affected had he been Prime Minister as well. The Budget of 1894 is a landmark in history—perhaps the weightiest contribution to the problem of the public finance of the country made during the nineteenth century. It established new principles in taxation, and it established them on so solid a basis that they have never since been

departed from. Harcourt himself probably did not realize the magnitude of the work he was doing. He opened up new territory for the exploitation of embarrassed Chancellors of the Exchequer, and that territory has proved a richer field than he could himself have contemplated.

The achievement was the natural goal to which he had been moving throughout his public life. His capacious and masterful mind roved over many fields of thought—international law, foreign affairs, social conditions, constitutional practice. Nothing that concerned the corporate life or the political mechanism of society was indifferent to him, and there was no subject to which he failed to contribute light as well as, not seldom, heat. But of all the subjects which engaged his mind that of national finance was, perhaps, the most constant and engrossing. He belonged to the old tradition of statesmanship which regarded a rigid public economy as the first essential of good government. He believed that an extravagant and wasteful habit of expenditure corrupted the public service, and had subtle reactions on policy, especially where the demands of the war departments were concerned. But it was not the spending of the national resources that furnished his chief interest in the subject. He had long been conscious of the anomalies of taxation, especially in regard to the land. A member of a landed family himself, he had early broken with the views of his class in regard to the special privileges with which a legislature, then chiefly controlled by the landed interest, had invested real estate, and the political disagreement with his brother at Nuneham had turned mainly upon this theme.

It had been his motive in going to the Treasury to carry out a far-reaching reform in this field, but it was not until 1894 that he found the circumstances favourable for the adventure. Confronted with a deficit of nearly £5,000,000, caused chiefly by warlike expenditure, he was armed with the argument of necessity for his new departure. Throughout the stirring events of the winter he had been actively engaged in preparing his plans. In this work his principal



assistants were Mr. Alfred Milner (Lord Milner), Sir R. Welby (afterwards Lord Welby), and his son, Lewis Harcourt. His first intention was not merely to reform the death duties, but to inaugurate a graduated income-tax. The latter idea was imposed on him by his son, who worked out a graduated scale of taxation which was approved by Harcourt. It was hotly opposed by Mr. Milner and finally abandoned by Harcourt not on merits, but because it was thought that a super income-tax and death duties in the same year would be too much for the country, would overload the Budget, and endanger the main principle on the establishment of which he had set his mind. But, compelled to yield on this point, he proposed to effect something in the nature of graduation by raising the income-tax a penny from 7*d.* to 8*d.*, and relieving incomes below the £500 limit of deductions which made the burden of the higher tax less than that of the lower.

The backbone of the scheme, however, was the extension to every class of property alike of the existing probate duty, under the new name of the estate duty. Hitherto, only free or unsettled personalty had been liable to probate duty, land and settled personalty being liable to succession duty only. The necessary corollary of the extension of the probate duty was the taxation of land on its true capital value. Hitherto land had only been taxed on the capitalized value of an annuity equal to the net rental of the land for the life of the heir. Thus, the elderly heir paid a great deal less than the heir who was youthful, but, however tender the years of the heir might be, duty was never chargeable on the full capital value. This privilege Harcourt proposed to abolish. Land, like personalty, was to pay on its true capital value. It was to be valued in future by professional valuers, in the same way that jewels, pictures and leaseholds had hitherto been valued for probate duty. "The real test," said Harcourt, "is what experienced persons estimate would be the fair market value at the time and in the circumstances."

That Harcourt was forging a more formidable instrument

than he knew is apparent from a letter to Lord Rosebery. (March 23), in which, outlining the new scheme of death duties, he said, "This, some years hence, will yield a large sum (between £4,000,000 and £5,000,000), but for the present year not more than £1,000,000." Within less than thirty years from the introduction of the duties, they were yielding the enormous revenue of £48,000,000. Nor is it likely that he foresaw the full measure of the effect of the reform upon the landed system of the country. Certainly his opponents did not foresee it or the opposition to his Budget, powerful as it was, would have been still more relentless. That opposition began very near at home. Within the Cabinet there was general agreement with the Budget proposals, but there was one exception to the approval. The Journal records :

*April 4.*— . . . Just as we were leaving the House at 6.30 a yellow box arrived from Rosebery containing an elaborate memo. by him directed against the Budget generally, and the graduated Death Duties in particular. W. V. H. much amused at the high Tory line taken by R., and said, "I wonder what the *Daily Chronicle* would think if they could see this !"

Dined at the Savoy, and when I got home found W. V. H. had written an admirable memo. in reply to R.'s on the Budget, in which he asks that he shall have the unanimous support of the Cabinet in his proposals if he is to go on, and proposes that the two Memos. shall be read at the Cabinet on Friday and discussed. [H.]

I am not at liberty to publish the memorandum from Lord Rosebery to which reference is made, and must confine myself to the memorandum which Harcourt wrote in reply to it :

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

11, DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL, S.W., *April 4, 1894.*—I am not sorry that our views should be frankly interchanged upon the financial principles which should govern the policy of the Liberal Party, both in their political and their fiscal aspects. This is the more necessary inasmuch as far as I understand the matter our opinions on this subject are fundamentally opposed. I will deal first with the *political question*, as that is the one to which you naturally attach primary importance. I will make some observations upon that head following the order of your own remarks.

(1) The proposals in question have for their first object to place all property of whatever kind upon an equal footing in respect of liability to taxation. I reserve for the moment the question of graduation. You say that this will "array property against us as our active and alarmed adversary, and that it will alienate the last relics of our propertied followers."

You are not, as I am, old enough to remember the great battle fought by Mr. Gladstone in 1853 on the succession duties. That contest secured for him the lasting hatred of the landed proprietors, and the enthusiastic support of the Liberal Party. The fears which your memorandum express are a faint echo of the panic and terrorism of that time. The Tories openly and the Whig magnates covertly feared and hated his policy. He had however the advantage of the courageous and strenuous support of Aberdeen and Granville. I have no doubt that we shall have a "formidable enemy" in those who find themselves deprived of monopolies which they ought never to have possessed, and the privileges which enrich them at the expense of their poorer fellows. That this class may be alienated from the Liberal Party I am not disposed to dispute.

If it be so, the Liberal Party will share the fate of another Party which was founded 1,894 years ago, of which it was written that it was "hard for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom." I think it is highly probable that there are "many young men who will go away sorrowful because they have great possessions."

(2) You say that the only compensation which we shall receive is in the friendship of the men under £500 per annum. You ask two questions—First, whether they are numerous enough to help, secondly, whether they are likely to be grateful.

As to the first question the answer is easy,—they form ninety-nine hundredths of the population and certainly nine-tenths of the constituencies. As to the second question, gratitude is a very uncertain quality—The only method I know of securing it is to deserve it.

(3) You say "that the masses do not appear to support the Liberal Party as much as we have a right to expect." If that is true, so much the worse for the Liberal Party. It is probably more the fault of the Party and of its leaders than of the masses.

It does not appear to me that we are likely to secure "their enthusiasm or active support" by appearing as the defenders of fiscal privileges and exemptions of the wealthy which are universally condemned.

(4) You desire to avert the "cleavages of classes"—The hope on your part is natural, but you are too late. "The horizontal division of parties" was certain to come as a consequence of household suffrage. The thin edge of the wedge was inserted, and the cleavage is expanding more and more every day. I do not wonder at your casting a longing lingering look on the "variety and rich-

ness and intellectual forces " which have passed away, but these are not the appanage of democracy.

(5) Your observations upon the American attempt at a *property tax* are well founded, but everybody admits the objections to a *property tax* which is levied annually on the possessors do not apply to a *death duty* which occurs only once in a generation on the transmission of estates into other hands.

(6) I agree in your objection to settlements, but I believe that we have taken such security in our Bill that there will be a fine rather than a premium upon settlements.

(7) The fear as to the taxation of capital had some foundation fifty or sixty years ago when capital in this country was in deficiency. At the present time it is superabundant, and not finding sufficiency of employment at home runs to waste in Argentine and elsewhere. You say our proposals may break up large properties in this country. It may be so, but large properties have been far more broken up by Lord Cairns's Act, which has permitted the spendthrift or gambling tenant for life—the Ailesburys, the Hardwicks, the Adrian Hopes, etc. etc., to dissipate the Savernakes, the Deepdenes and the Wimpoles. Large properties will be kept together by prudent possessors and prudent successors—the Fitzwilliams, the Bedfords, the Portmans, the Devonshires, the Northumberlands. They will be broken up when they fall into the hands of Lonsdales and Clifdens. It is the first and not the second class of large properties which are popular, charitable and worth preserving.

Your argument seems to involve that it is necessary to maintain an unequal incidence of taxation in order to avert the breaking up of large properties irrespective of the character of their possessors. This is a very fine old Tory doctrine—it is one which the Liberal Party are not likely to accept.

(8) As to art collections, they have come largely into the market lately. The Hamiltons, the Spencers, the Marlboroughs, the Lansdownes, the Ashburnhams, the Radnors, etc. have hurried to turn their treasures into cash without remorse, and regardless of their destination. I am not aware that the bulk of these things have gone abroad.

On the contrary they have become more available to the British public than before.

I am sorry to say that a large portion of them have passed into the hands of public institutions where they will never pay death duties at all.

(9) It is not correct to say that we are doing all this to get a million.

Our first object is to accomplish an act of financial justice to which the Liberal Party are deeply pledged.

The produce is not a million—that is only a six months' yield of the tax of four millions which will be in the end available, either for

the reduction of other taxes or, what is more probable, to satisfy further Jingo panics.

I must make one remark upon your alarm with respect to election funds, and its bearing on the next dissolution.

I cannot entertain a doubt that what is necessary will be provided by rich men who are already peers or those who desire to become peers.

For me personally this particular point of view has little interest. I have paid as much in purse and in person for the Party as I intend to do. The fate of the present Government and the issue of the next election are temporary incidents which I view with philosophic indifference. I care nothing for election funds, their sources, their disposal or their results. I have done with all this part of the business. What I care for as long as I have any personal responsibility for the public finance is to establish principles of fiscal equality which are worthy of the Liberal Party, and which if defeated to-day will have a resurrection hereafter.

I am sorry that my views of the political bearings of my financial proposals should be so completely in antagonism to yours. Like you I admit I may be wrong, but like you I desire to place them on record, and I should be glad that your memorandum and mine should be laid before the Cabinet on Friday. It seems hardly fair to me in our respective positions that your elaborate protest against the Budget should be buried in our respective bosoms. I think that our colleagues ought to be made aware of our divergent opinions and form their judgment upon them. I ought not to be left in doubt whether in this arduous contest I am to have the cordial support of the Government and its head.

I need only say a word on the subject of graduation. I believe the principle of graduation to be a sound one, and I am sure it is one on which the Liberal Party will insist, but I agree that a new principle of this description should be introduced in moderation, and I am quite disposed to meet your views on the subject of the mitigation of the scale as far as is consistent with the exigencies of the Revenue, and this I hope may be to a great degree accomplished.

As to aggregation I do not see what argument can be advanced against it. If graduation is accepted at all it must be upon the total sum of the value of the whole property whatever may be its description.

I observe in a recent article in the Journal of the Statistical Society after a statement of the principle of valuation for death duties adopted in England and Belgium the following observation :—

“ Such are the systems adopted in England and Belgium in determining the value of real estate subject to succession duty, viz., the substitution of a fictitious value obtained by multiplying the income by a given quantity in the place of actual realizable value. In all other countries the duty is levied upon the actual realizable value of the property.”

When you say that the exemptions in the Budget apply only to the men under £500 a year you omit to observe that the change in the death duties will affect no one who leaves under £25,000 in personalty.

Lord Rosebery accepted the modification in the graduation scale as meeting his main doubt, and thought it unnecessary to discuss the memoranda in the Cabinet. "I thought that coon would come down, but I did not expect him to do it so quickly and so completely," is the sardonic comment of Lewis Harcourt in the *Journal* (April 5). But though the memoranda were not discussed in the Cabinet, Harcourt brought them before two of his colleagues. In sending them to Mr. Morley, he said :

II, DOWNING STREET, *April 11*.—As it will probably fall to you one of these days to write "a short account of a late short Administration," I think it will instruct and amuse you to see the enclosed correspondence. You will find it good Sunday reading, and I hope you will consider my scriptural quotations particularly apposite. • • •

You will not be surprised to learn that I am a little disappointed that my offer to submit the two memoranda to the Cabinet was not accepted.

"As soon as the 'short administration' has become 'late,' so far from writing its history, I shall do my best to drive it out of my memory, as I always do with nightmares," replied Mr. Morley (April 8). "R.'s disquisition would have been thought extreme in its Toryism by Lord Eldon," wrote Harcourt to Spencer, in sending him the two memoranda. "There is nothing to do with rubbish of this sort except to treat it with the contempt it deserves." Spencer sought to throw oil on the troubled waters, and to preach peace. Writing in reply, he said :

*Spencer to Harcourt.*

*April 22*.— . . . I do not pretend to be able to enter upon the arena myself, but I do not think that I would take the view put forward in R.'s papers. Still as he held them he was right to put them before you, and although it gave you trouble he paid you the compliment to bow to your judgment and views, by not desiring the agreement to be laid before the Cabinet.

\* On the other hand you showed your wish to be moderate by modifying your graduation.

Pray do not look upon R. as your enemy. You two should have confidence in each other to work properly together. I do not think you have any solid ground for what you said in regard to him this morning to me.

There was a further subject of difference between the Prime Minister and the Chancellor. Lord Rosebery took exception to the overlapping of the death duties in the case of a person who died before he had paid all his instalments. The liability of the new successor to pay the outstanding instalments seemed inconsistent with the idea that property paid this tax only once in a generation. On this Harcourt replied :

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

11, DOWNING STREET, April 9.—I don't think you have quite appreciated the difference between the two classes of death duties.

1. The probate duty, where the tax is levied on the *corpus* of the property.

2. The succession duty, where the tax has reference to the interest of the successor.

In the case of the Probate Duty which is now applicable only to personalty, the whole duty is levied at once on each devolution. The proposal now is to subject realty to this duty which it has never paid before.

If there is to be equality the whole duty must be levied on each devolution as in the case of personalty, but the indulgence is granted to realty of paying the duty by instalments. But if the beneficiary dies before the duty is discharged his estate must be liable for it just as if he had paid it at once.

No other principle would maintain the equality of treatment of real and personal property. In the case of succession duty, which has regard to the interest taken by the successor, the instalments will cease to be payable on his death, but this is a wholly different case founded upon different principles.

Events were to make an ironic comment on this phase of the Budget when, ten years later, the Nuneham estates changed hands by death twice within six months. Harcourt's differences over the Budget proposals were not confined to the Prime Minister. He was engaged, except for a few days' "breather" at Shoreham in company with Coleridge (the Lord Chief Justice), and James, in almost

daily consultations with the officials over the details of the scheme. These meetings were apt to generate a good deal of warmth. Thus the Journal records (April 9) :

. . . A severe fight all the afternoon in W. V. H.'s room at the H. of C. between Herschell, Milner, Jenkyns, Melville and Karslake over the Death Duties Bill. I suggested that the place was like a bear-pit, and that I should like to poke buns through the door on the end of an umbrella. . . .

The jest proved serviceable, and when a few days later the temperature of the room rose again Sir Francis Mowatt sent to Lady Harcourt a note asking her to "send a bun on a stick." A messenger promptly arrived with an invitation to the combatants to go to lunch at 11, Downing Street, and under the gentle persuasion of this artful "bun" serenity was restored. Harcourt's battles usually ended over the luncheon table.

The introduction of the Budget, the novel character of which had been the subject of much anticipatory discussion in the Press, was awaited with unusual public interest, and when Harcourt rose to outline it on April 16 he addressed an audience unprecedented even on "Budget nights." He spoke for two hours and forty minutes, adopting his graver style, known as his "church manner"—a fact which led to a little comedy behind his back, a clever caricature of him by Frank Lockwood representing him in a white surplice, apparently reading the lessons of the day, being passed from hand to hand and carrying with it a procession of smiles.

## II

The details of the Budget will be found in Appendix V, but the broad proposals were set forth in the following note from Harcourt to the Queen :

### *Harcourt to Queen Victoria.*

April 11, 1894.— . . . (1) To meet £2,000,000 (of the deficit) by using the new Sinking Fund to pay off the debt contracted by the late Government under the Naval Defence Act, and which is charged on the revenue of the present year.

(2) The equalization of the death duties by making the Probate



Duty applicable to real estate and settled property, which is not at present subject to that duty. This is estimated to yield about one million this year and ultimately four millions. It will be on a graduated scale at higher rates on the larger properties.

(3) An additional penny on the Income-tax, the produce of which will be diminished by an allowance to incomes under £500 a year, and also an allowance to owners of real estate who are now charged on their gross rental.

(4) A duty of 6d. extra on a gallon of spirits and 6d. extra on a barrel of beer. The great profits on these trades will justify this increase, and the cost will not practically be raised to the consumer. The Government are of opinion that the above is a fair distribution amongst different classes of the heavy additional burden it is found necessary to impose. Care has been taken that its incidence shall be lightened on those who are least able to bear it.

Considering the momentous character of the scheme, the Budget was received with extraordinary friendliness, the only serious note of hostility coming, *more suo*, from the *Morning Post*, which declared that the most important change in our fiscal system since the days of Walpole was "introduced with the levity of a schoolboy whose knowledge of finance is limited to some Socialist manual." The Liberal Press welcomed the Budget as a triumph of social equity, and the Conservative Press generally did not deny the justice of the proposals. For once, Harcourt enjoyed the felicity generally denied to so combative a statesman of being almost universally popular, and he was warned to reflect on the biblical injunction to beware "when all men speak well of you." From his colleagues in the Cabinet he received cordial congratulations on his historic Budget, the Prime Minister finding his gloomy forebodings completely dispelled. "How moderate I have been," Harcourt wrote to him, "is testified by the fact that I have just had a visit of congratulation from Natty (Rothschild) who does not seem to mind the prospect of Walter paying a quarter of a million. . . . If he is content, I don't know who there is left to grumble—except it be the Guinnesses and Besses." Campbell-Bannerman's congratulations took a practical shape. "In anticipation of a raised duty on spirits (he wrote), I have been importing some Styrian cherry brandy

with which I have a long-standing acquaintance. I am sending you half-a-dozen bottles, and I hope you will find it good."

But the public welcome given to the Budget did not mean that the battle had been won. It only meant that the general sense of the justice of the measure had for the moment silenced the hostile forces. In and out of the House, those forces began to mobilize after the first shout of acclamation had passed away, and during the next three months Harcourt was at work ceaselessly with tongue and pen in meeting the attacks directed against his proposals from many powerful quarters. His gifts as a parliamentarian were never more conspicuous than in his management of the House in this memorable conflict. Whatever his irascibility in private, in public debate his good temper was unflinching, and it is a remarkable proof of his adroitness that throughout the passage of the Budget—indeed throughout the whole business of the Session—he never once employed the closure. His most formidable assailant in the House of Commons was his predecessor at the Treasury, Goschen, and the most industrious, Mr. Henry Chaplin. The dangers of the situation were great, for the majority on which Harcourt had to rely was exiguous, and it had been rendered still more doubtful by the defection of the Parnellites, who numbered nine, and who had thrown in their lot with the Opposition on the new beer and spirits duties. Those duties were the vulnerable heel of the Finance Bill, for the trade at once organized a great crusade against the attempt "to rob the poor man of his beer," and behind this spear-head of popular feeling the landed interest mobilized their attack. Harcourt insisted that the extra 6*d.* on the gallon of spirits and the extra 6*d.* on the barrel of beer were justified by the great profits of the trade, and that the cost would not fall on the consumer. But this argument only inflamed the trade, and as the second reading of the Bill advanced it became evident that victory hung in the balance. It was even suggested in the Press that Harcourt had deliberately overweighted his Budget, and was riding for the fall of the Government.

The opposition of the Parnellites had brought down the normal majority of the Government to eighteen, and with the votes of certain Liberal brewers and others (Courtney among them) in doubt the position was seriously imperilled. Harcourt met the menace with great address. Replying (May 10) to Mr. Chaplin and Mr. Balfour, who had declared that the great country houses were threatened, he said :

. . . Sir, I observe, in all these debates, though you put forward Savernake, Chatsworth and Holland House, there is one class of landowners who have been prudently kept in the background—namely, the great owners of land values. It is upon them as they know perfectly well, that the chief burden of this taxation will fall, and therefore they have put forward the case of every other class first—the yeoman-farmer, the licensed victualler, or the ruined brewer. There is an idea in private circles, I believe, that there are dukes who expect that they may lose millions of money over this system, and, if so, I suppose it is because there will be millions to meet the demand. That brings me to the question of graduation. . . .

Mr. Balfour had admitted that the course of the Opposition in moving the rejection of the Finance Bill was unprecedented, and, Harcourt drove the point home, insisting that this was not an attack on the Budget only, but a general attack on the Government. The temptation to take advantage of the Irish vote had been too great. The Government were challenged on the fundamental principles of the Budget. They were ready to take the opinion of the House first, and after that the opinion of the country. At this the Opposition shouted, "When? When?" but Harcourt merely advised them not to be in a hurry. The Opposition would be bound by the vote they were about to give, not in any circumstances to add to the taxation of beer and spirits. "And what are you going to do?" he inquired of Goschen, as he leant on the box. "Are you going to add taxation to tea, to sugar, or corn? Or are you going to put it all on the income-tax?" He made a good debating point by quoting a declaration by Chamberlain in the past that graduated death-duties were the only fair principle of taxation. This he put side by side with Goschen's declaration against the principle. "Which of these two

eminent authorities," he asked, "is going to govern your finance? Which is to be the predominant partner in this mixed concern?" He concluded:

. . . We place graduated taxation before the country as a fundamental principle of Liberal finance. It will survive the factious combination of to-night. If you want to go to the people on such an issue, we are ready to meet you. The masses are grateful for the boon extended to them under the Budget; the millionaire may be mulcted, the small man will gain. Every man owning £1,000 or less gains by it—his payment will be reduced. Half a million will profit in this fashion. So with the small owners of realty—all of them will obtain small or great relief under the death duties, and a still greater boon under the income-tax. . . .

He summed up his case under four heads:

Given the necessity for raising large sums for national defence by increased taxation, how is the money to be got? We affirm and you deny that the powerful and wealthy liquor interests should make a further contribution. Secondly, we affirm and you deny that for the purposes of the death duties realty and personalty should be treated alike. (*Mr. Balfour*,—No, I did not deny it.) Then why do you want to throw out the Budget? We affirm and you deny (Opposition laughter)—I do not know which of you is going to deny—that taking a moderate system of graduation immense wealth should pay at a higher rate than smaller fortunes. That is a clear issue. We affirm and you deny—it remains to be seen how long you will venture to deny—that if great expenditure requires a high rate of income-tax, the burden should fall more lightly on the humbler incomes, (*Mr. Balfour*,—I asserted it) and until the late First Lord of the Treasury and the late Chancellor of the Exchequer can make up their minds on the subject of finance you are not entitled to throw out the Budget. These are the clear issues which divide our principles from those of the Tory Party. (*Mr. Balfour*,—No, they do not.) If I may use a vulgar expression, I would venture to say that you are beginning to see that it is not safe for you to face the music. If you should defeat the Budget, you will not defeat the principles on which it is founded, those principles being founded on just and equal taxation, adjusted to the capacity of the various classes to bear the burden. On those proposals we challenge the vote of the House of Commons to-night, and when the time comes we shall ask the judgment of the country.

Following this speech, after midnight, the division was taken, and by the narrow margin of fourteen votes, 308 to 294, the second reading was carried, and the way was clear

for the struggle in Committee. But by this time the storm was raging outside, and Harcourt had to meet the invective and the tears of friends as well as foes—sometimes of those whose hospitality he had enjoyed, and who were filled with panic at the menace that now hung over the country houses. He tempered his replies to these alarms with assurances that the menace was not so dreadful as it seemed. Thus to Lady Leigh, he wrote :

*Harcourt to Lady Leigh.*

11, DOWNING STREET, S.W., April 26.—I think your alarm is unfounded at the probable effect of the death duties on your landed estates. The total additional sum which all the landed estates of the United Kingdom will be asked to contribute towards the defence of the nation is about £450,000 per annum. I do not believe that such an amount, which will be mainly borne by the richest amongst them, will be a "death blow to country houses and estates." A great proportion of it will, I am glad to know, fall upon ground rents and values in large towns, a class of property which has hitherto escaped its fair share of taxation. When estates have already "heavy charges upon them owing to accidental circumstances or the extravagance of some predecessor" the tax will fall only on the free margin which remained after the deduction of their charges. No one will pay except in proportion to their means. I cannot think that the owners of large landed estates will gain anything in the estimation of their country by claiming special exemption on the ground of their social position, from taxes which fall on the rest of their fellow citizens. And I confess I am not sorry that the House of Lords will not be exposed to the temptation of using their legislative authority to defeat the principles of equal taxation in their own personal interests. Nothing could be more fatal to the legislative influence of their order. I am old enough to recollect the same "threats of pain and ruin" on the occasion of the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Succession Duty, but in the end it was proved that the privileged classes have been a good deal more frightened than hurt by the extinction of unjust monopolies. The truth is that the prudent and well conducted owners of great estates will survive and do credit to themselves and good to their neighbours as heretofore. But the order of the Ailesburys and their like will disappear and be replaced by the Iveaghs and others who will be able to do justice to those dependent on the owners of land, and discharge their duties which the former proprietors have been incapable of fulfilling. There is no class of society which is exempt from the law that "the sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third and fourth generations." But though they will by

the law of nature suffer a disappearance of the unfittest, the best types will survive, and the good old name of Leigh will flourish in a prime old age.

A critic of a more serious character entered the field against him in the person of the Duke of Devonshire, who, following the second reading debate, wrote to Harcourt :

*Devonshire to Harcourt.*

14, GREAT GEORGE STREET, Westminster, S.W., May 11, 1894.— I am sorry that you were interrupted by Chaplin last night, because it is clear that you were about to say something about the future position of my estates under your proposals, which you did not complete. You said "when he tells me that taxation of this character is going to destroy the magnificent fortune of Chatsworth, that is an argument which carries little weight with me." But the interruption prevented you explaining why it carried little weight with you. It is difficult to understand what you mean by the magnificent fortune of Chatsworth. The Chatsworth estate is not a large one, and has never within many thousands covered the cost of keeping up the house and grounds of Chatsworth. It is true that there are very large estates in Derbyshire and other parts of the country, but besides the many mortgages which will of course be deducted from the value of the estates, they are encumbered with the maintenance of other large houses besides Chatsworth, such as Hardwick and Lismore. The expense of maintaining these places, which is I think incurred not solely for my own private gratification, added to the subscriptions, pensions, etc., which *residence* as well as *possession* involve, is such that the surplus income from these estates has never been large, and is now a very small one. It is difficult to form any estimate of the capital value which under your proposals will be placed on these estates, but I suppose that in forming that estimate no allowance will be made in respect of residential expenditure or expenditure in the nature of subscriptions, pensions, etc. A heavy duty will therefore be charged on a capital value which, *except for the purpose of maintaining the place*, will produce no revenue at all. So far as I can judge the amount of estate duty and legacy duty payable by my successor will amount to a sum which cannot be less than 5 or 6 and may be up to 9 or 10 years' available income, after keeping up the places as they have been kept up hitherto. This amount can only be paid, either by putting a complete stop to the residential expenditure for a certain number of years, or by raising on it a mortgage the interest on which will so reduce the available income as to make it permanently impossible to keep up the places as they have been kept up. It is quite possible that all this has been foreseen, and I am not contending that it is a necessity either for me or for my successor to have so

many places. All I wish to point out is that there is no available surplus out of which this increased taxation can be met consistently with the maintenance of these places, and that it must inevitably lead either to their sale, or whereas in the case of Chatsworth sale would be impossible, to the closing of them, which will, I imagine, be some loss not only to the possessor but to the public generally.

Harcourt's reply has not been preserved, but it is evident that in it he made some allusion to Malwood, for, writing on May 21, Devonshire said :

*Devonshire to Harcourt.*

. . . I daresay that your successor will have to pay more on Malwood, but Malwood has a selling or letting value that Chatsworth has not. I think that if your present proposals are fairly administered by the department the house and grounds at Chatsworth ought to be valued for estate duty at *O*. What is the selling value of Chatsworth ? and who would bid for it ? But even if this view should be taken you are going to put an enormous tax on the capital value of the estates, the income of which does little more than keep up Chatsworth and the other places.

If you want them to be shut up or sold to men who have other sources of income, this is all right, but it will be the inevitable consequence of your proposals.

Devonshire pursued the controversy in public, and, speaking at Southampton, said that the larger part of the expenditure of the rich took the form of payment of wages, and that the reduction of expenditure would mean the reduction of wages and the loss not merely of a portion, but of the whole means of subsistence of many of the poor. Harcourt replied to this speech in the House on June 22 in the discussion of an amendment which would, if accepted, have made a substantial difference to the Harcourt inheritance. The amendment was to the effect that where, by reason of a second death, the estate duty should become payable twice within four years, the second payment should only be one-half of the first. Harcourt replied that the amendment would be unfair unless the Exchequer was also to benefit in the case of an unusually long tenure. On the point raised by the Duke of Devonshire at Southampton, which was also raised in this debate, he said he would never assent to the proposition that a particular class of the community should

be exempt from taxation in order that they might be generous and munificent. While he was glad that people were generous and kept great houses and opened them to their neighbours, he was not willing that that munificence and that generosity should be founded upon an exemption from taxation to which other people were liable.

Meanwhile he was engaged in a controversy with *The Times* which had challenged his proposition "that no man has any natural right to control the succession to his property after his death, and that the power to make wills or settlements in succession is the creation of positive laws, which prescribe the limits and conditions of such power." He discussed with his usual erudition the foundations of private property, the right of the State, the nature of land taxation in the feudal period, and the principle of graduated taxation, and concluded (May 1) :

. . . You claim exemption for Blenheim, Chatsworth, Wentworth, Castle-Howard, Burleigh, Hatfield, Longleat. You ask, "How are the contents of these palaces to be valued? By what rule, if any, are books, pictures, and other valuable but perishable commodities to be appraised?" That seems a somewhat astonishing question. Is it possible that you are not aware that personalty of this description is, and always has been, valued and appraised—though often very inadequately—for probate duty on the death of each successor on its principal value? You seek to distinguish between property yielding income and property which yields little or no income. The present law as regards personalty knows no such distinction. Diamonds yield no income, but they pay probate duty. The application of such a distinction to the case of realty alone is the most signal injustice of the existing system. There is an enormous mass of property yielding an insignificant present income, but of great saleable value, such as building land, ground values, reversions, &c., which pay practically nothing in the shape either of income-tax or of death duty.

You demand exemption for "the lordly mansions which constitute one of the ornaments of our land," whilst the leasehold of a moderate house pays upon its capital value. If that is the sense in which you read the doctrines of Adam Smith, that men should "contribute in proportion to their interests in the estate," I must respectfully ask leave to differ from such a conclusion.

From even more exalted quarters, Harcourt's scheme



evoked some protest. During the debates in Committee the Queen wrote to him as follows :

*Queen Victoria to Harcourt.*

BALMORAL CASTLE, *June 5, 1894.*—The Queen thanks Sir William Harcourt for his kind congratulations for her birthday. That was the only *warm* as well as fine day we have had since we came here. We had it very cold and wet. It has improved lately and has become warmer now.

The Queen is much concerned about the provisions made in the Budget regarding the death duties which, in her opinion, cannot fail to cripple all landowners. Many properties are now only kept afloat at considerable loss to the proprietors who, if the Budget becomes law, may be driven to still further curtail their expenditure. This must inevitably affect the poorer classes, especially the agricultural community, numbers of whom will be thrown out of work altogether. Then again country seats will be unoccupied and charities throughout the country be denuded of support. Where again will be the inducement to owners of property to effect improvements, when by so doing they know they are only encumbering their successors—possibly their widows, who, the Queen fears, are also placed in a worse position than before by the proposed death duties. This leads the Queen to remark that she has always deplored the action of the probate laws which subject widows and nearest of kin, at the time of deep sorrow, to an immediate minute examination and valuation by some strangers of their private possessions which she thinks is painful and cruel. Most earnestly does the Queen urge and hope that Sir William Harcourt may be able to modify these proposals, which she owns she thinks dangerous.

Harcourt, though he was careful never to forget those little domestic inquiries which won the heart of Victoria, did not hesitate to use plain speech to her when plain speech was required, and he took the opportunity four days later of speaking his mind on the subject of the Queen's alarms :

*Harcourt to Queen Victoria.*

11, DOWNING STREET, WHITEHALL, S.W., *June 9, 1894.*—Sir W. Harcourt presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and begs leave to report that in the last few days solid progress has been made with the clauses of the Budget Bill in Committee.

Sir William desires to assure the Queen that the outcry which has been made by the landed interest on the subject of extraordinary pressure upon them in the Budget is grossly exaggerated if not entirely unfounded. Lord Salisbury's statement that it will absorb

four years' income is entirely contrary to the fact. In the case of a man with £100,000 the additional taxation will be 1 per cent, and in that of a man with a million 4 per cent, and in the case of the last it might amount to 2 years' income payable in eight years. The truth is that the landowners have been so long accustomed to exemption from their fair share of the taxation borne by the other classes of the community that they resent as a great injustice that they should be treated on an equal footing.

It is no doubt a great misfortune that owing to the immense expenditure upon armaments it should be necessary to raise an additional sum of 4 millions by taxation, but that can only be done by imposing the burthen equally upon all classes with a regard to the ability of the several parties to bear it.

Sir William believes that the great support which the Budget has received in the House of Commons, and still more outside, far beyond the Party majority which the Government can command—is due to a conviction that it is an honest attempt to distribute the burthen fairly and justly amongst all classes of the community.

Of the sum to be raised not one fourth part will be asked of the landed interest; the rest will fall on the personal property; and yet it is those who will contribute least who complain most.

It is true the land is now in a distressed condition, but it will only pay in proportion to what it received. Other industries are also depressed, but they do not make that a pretext for refusing to pay their share in the public burthens necessary for the defence of the country.

It is a sense of the justice of our demand that gave the Government a majority of over 100 in the division on the question of graduation.

It is quite impossible to raise large sums of money without inconveniencing some one, but no class—and least of all those who are the loudest in their demands for augmented expenditure—ought to refuse to bear their part in the necessary sacrifice.

Sir William is extremely anxious to remove any particular hardships which may arise in the case of the land, and has already opened communications privately with the Opposition to see if it is possible, consistently with the necessities of the public service, to meet their views.

### III

Meanwhile the Bill was being fought through Committee with steady purpose. There was a good deal of obstruction, but Harcourt was resolute in his refusal to apply the gag on a money measure, and his conciliatory attitude disarmed the opposition of much of its bitterness. With the Leader of the Opposition he was, as always, on the most cordial terms, and among the pleasant souvenirs of the struggle is

a little note thrown across the table of the House by Mr. Balfour on April 23: "My dear Harcourt, You ought to go to dinner. I will manage —. Yours A. J. B." Wherever it was possible to make a concession, Harcourt made it; but he would not yield to any of the multitude of amendments which struck at the principles of the Budget. On an amendment brought forward by Sir R. Webster, he maintained (May 29) that the State had the first claim on all estates passing by death, and that legatees could not be robbed of that which they had never owned. On this contention Mr. Balfour submitted that this doctrine was not justified either by the law of nature or by the feudal system. Harcourt accepted an amendment brought forward by Mr. Butcher that if the only life interest in a settled property arising on the death of a deceased owner were that of a husband or wife the further estate duty should not be payable, and one from Mr. Balfour providing that the principal value of any property should be estimated to be the price which, in the opinion of the commissioners, such property would fetch in the open market at the time of the owner's death. He also agreed to bring in an amendment under which any death duties charged in the colonies would be deducted from the charge made in this country, provided that reciprocal treatment was given by the colony in question. Further concessions were made in the case of small properties. When the Bill was through Committee Harcourt wrote to the Queen, no doubt with a sly pleasure at the nature of his communication:

*Harcourt to Queen Victoria.*

. . . The concessions made to the landowners in the course of the Bill greatly modified the hostility of the Opposition. They will still have very favourable treatment as compared with the owners of other kinds of property. It is from them that the main opposition to the Budget proceeded. It is remarkable that the smallest majorities for the Government were off the increase of the beer and spirit duties—a tax which in fact was approved by the great majority of both Parties, but it was hoped that by a combination with the Parnellites and the Liberal brewers the Government might be displaced. This however did not come about.

On the Report stage, which occupied six sittings, some drafting amendments were inserted by the Government, but the Bill was very little changed when it came up for its third reading on July 17. In reply to Mr. Balfour's criticisms on "revolutionary" and "oppressive" finance, Harcourt said that even a man owning property worth £1,000,000 would only have to pay an additional £1,020 by way of insurance from the age of forty onwards against the death duties. And such a man might easily, he remarked, throw away a sum like that in an afternoon on a "moderate two-year-old." The remark called forth a good deal of amused comment, for it was a very obvious thrust at the Prime Minister, who had just won the Derby with Ladas. When the Bill, having passed through all its stages, went to the House of Lords, there were strong protests against its provisions, but the peers did not venture, as they ventured fifteen years later, to set up a claim to control the finance of the country, and the Bill duly became law.

The passage of the measure brought Harcourt more compliments than had ever fallen to his lot before. *The Times* confessed that "Sir William Harcourt's management of the Finance Bill, simply as management, must be admitted by his opponents to deserve the praises bestowed upon it by his friends." His friends rejoiced in the triumph. They regarded it, not merely as the greatest legislative achievement of the Parliament, but as a handsome set-off against the injustice to which they felt Harcourt had been subjected in the matter of the Premiership. He received through Mr. (now Lord) Channing a request from the Liberal members to attend a dinner to celebrate the passing of the Bill, and, in accepting the invitation (July 5), he said :

. . . I shall accept with pride and pleasure this hospitable token of their goodwill and approval of the efforts however imperfect which I have made to deserve their confidence and contribute to our common cause.

The steadfast and cordial support which I have had from every section of the Party throughout this difficult business could alone have secured its success, and I shall be glad of the opportunity to

express to them all my sense of gratitude for the indulgence they have extended to me. . . .

There was a strong disposition in some quarters to give the celebration a definite anti-Rosebery character, and to exclude all members of the Government except Harcourt's supporters in the leadership controversy; but Harcourt declined to be a party to a pronounced anti-Rosebery demonstration. The dinner, which took place at the Hotel Metropole on August 1, was presided over by Jacob Bright, and attended by 163 Liberal members. There were notable absentees from the Liberal front bench, but in the breezy speech which Harcourt delivered there was no hint of discontents. Whatever was going on behind the scenes, he always kept his powder in public for the enemy.

Harcourt not only liked congratulations himself, but enjoyed bestowing them on others, and as the controversy was reaching its end he paid a handsome tribute to the Civil Service for the help he had received in preparing the Budget. Presiding at the annual dinner of the Civil Service, at which Lord Welby, who had now retired from the Treasury to the House of Lords, was the guest, he mingled chaff and praise of the men who had assisted him during the past months. "*Vivat Regina* and no money returned," he declared to be the motto of Her Majesty's servants, and referring to the Civil Service, he said:

. . . We creatures of accident, politically, in departments, who are here to-day and gone to-morrow are evanescent items in that administration, but the Civil Service, like the river, goes on for ever. Of that Civil Service I will say what I know—that I believe it is without example in any other nation in the world. . . . I must veil what I have to say in the decency of a learned language. When I say that, I mean a certain secrecy, because I do not want it known how much people who appear before the world as the men who do a thing are not the persons who do it; and if I should describe the life of the Civil Service of England I should describe it in the well-known lines of Virgil—*Sic vos non vobis mellificatis apes*. We get a great deal of credit that does not belong to us. . . .

In speaking of Welby's translation to the House of Lords, Harcourt took the opportunity of denying a rumour which

was current at the time that he intended to retire to the House of Lords himself after the passage of the Finance Bill. " I hope," he said, " long to preserve in private life the intimacy and friendship of Lord Welby, but he has gone to a place to which I can never go (" Yes "). No, no ; I am telling you what is the truth. There is a gulf fixed. I cannot go to him and he cannot come to me." It was a decision that caused him no distress. He was, before everything else, a House of Commons man, and he had no intention to exchange the smell of powder for the vanity of titles.

## IV

Although the Session was unusually brief and was mainly occupied with the Budget, there was an exceptional amount of business to get through. The last words of Gladstone in the House of Commons had been a declaration, apropos of the rejection of the Home Rule Bill by the House of Lords, that the conflict between the two Houses must be brought to an issue. It was obvious that, in the present state of parties and the present mood of the country, the Lords' issue could not be effectively raised on the subject of Ireland alone. The *mot d'ordre* was the " filling up of the cup." The hostility of the House of Lords to the spirit of reform on this side of St. George's Channel as well as on the other was to be challenged by a series of measures which, if not accepted by the Upper Chamber, would give the Government a strong case for appealing to the country against the unrestricted veto of the peers. Apart from this consideration, which, in the circumstances of the reconstructed Ministry, carried less weight with Harcourt than with some others, it was necessary to do something to redeem the pledge of the Newcastle programme. It was necessary also, if the small majority at the command of the Government was to be held together, to give satisfaction to the various elements of which it was made up. Bills had to be introduced as evidence of the good faith of the Government, even if there was small chance of carrying them into effect. The Irishmen, especially after the *faux pas* of Lord Rosebery on

the opening day of the Session, had to be reassured, the Scotch were demanding the extension to their country of the local government reform already conceded to England, the Welshmen had to be satisfied on the subject of Welsh disestablishment, and the long-standing grievance of the poor boroughs in regard to the rating inequalities of the metropolis could not be ignored.

With these, and the many other reforms brought forward, Harcourt was not concerned except in so far as his leadership of the House involved his supervision of all its business ; but his preoccupation with the Budget and with the grave discussions on foreign affairs, which will be referred to later, were interrupted by the multitudinous details of the general work of the Session, both inside and outside the House. Some of his tasks were uncongenial enough. He had, for example, to defend the continuance of the grant of £10,000 a year to the Duke of Edinburgh, who had become Duke of Coburg, against the attack of the Radicals. There was widespread feeling on the subject, which Harcourt shared. It was felt that the Duke should have surrendered the whole sum he received from the taxpayers of this country, £25,000 a year, when he succeeded to a foreign throne ; but, while the Government revoked the grant of £15,000, they left the second grant of £10,000 to the decision of the Duke, who decided to retain it, whereupon Mr. A. C. Morton and Labouchere gave notice of a motion that as the recipient of the annuity had become the sovereign of a foreign State the money should no longer be paid. " We shall want all the help we can get from the Opposition on Friday evening," wrote Harcourt to James, " as you are aware it is just one of those questions on which we can very little control our own Party. I have spoken to Balfour on the subject, and I hope you will see that your contingent (the Liberal Unionists) will come to our aid." Writing to the Queen on the matter, Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Queen Victoria.*

11, DOWNING STREET, April 21, 1894.—Sir William Harcourt presents his humble duty to Your Majesty, and begs leave to report

that Mr. Labouchere's motion relating to the Duke of Coburg's annuity was defeated to-night by 298 votes against 67. Mr. Balfour and Sir William used every exertion to secure as large a majority as possible, and Sir William feels sure that the Queen will regard the result as highly satisfactory.

Sir William begs leave to congratulate Your Majesty on the happy events of the marriage at Coburg, a place so full of tender recollections to the Queen, and in addition on the betrothal of the Princess Alix [to the Tsarevitch], whose singular charm and fascination Sir William had the pleasure of knowing at Balmoral.

*Queen Victoria to Harcourt.*

VILLA FABBRICOTTI, FLORENCE, *April 24, 1894.*—The Queen thanks Sir William Harcourt very much for his letters, and especially for his congratulations on the two very interesting events of the 19th and 20th.

The wedding was a very bright one, and her dear grandchildren are very happy.

The betrothal of her beloved granddaughter Princess Alix of Hesse is a very romantic as well as auspicious event, and very unexpected. For five years the young people were, it now seems, attached to each other in silence—and the obstacles seemed insurmountable. However their attachment was so great, so deep that the effort has been made to lessen the difficulties and obstacles respecting religion. She has a strong character, and may be of great use. And the Cesarewitch is quite charming, simple and unaffected; brought up by an Englishman his feelings are very English, which he always speaks. His likeness to the Duke of York is quite remarkable.

In view of the small and doubtful majority at the command of the Government, the heavy programme was carried through with remarkable success, and at the end of the Session Harcourt was able to write to the Queen (August 16) :

. . . Considering the fact that the present Session has been one of the shortest on record and the special difficulties attending it, the outcome may be regarded as creditable to Parliament. There will have been passed into law 33 Government Bills and 20 Bills introduced by private members. Of these nine-tenths may be regarded as non-contentious, but useful measures tending to the public convenience. When less than a month ago Sir William propounded a list of Bills which might be passed before the end of August the announcement was received with incredulity and ridicule. But it will be found that well within the period named not only those measures but 10 additional Bills have been successfully carried through, and in this respect the power of the House of Commons



to transact the necessary business of the country has been conspicuously displayed.

Not all the Government measures reached the Statute Book, the Evicted Tenants Bill being rejected by the House of Lords, and the Welsh Disestablishment Bill not getting beyond the first reading stage.

## V

In spite of the remarkable achievements of the Session, the internal condition of the Government was growing steadily worse. Disagreements on foreign policy were completing the disintegration of a structure which had been doomed by what was now recognized, by friends and foes alike, as the blunder over the leadership question. From the moment of the "predominant partner" speech, with its humiliating sequel in the House of Commons, Lord Rosebery's stock had declined, while the prestige of Harcourt had been greatly enhanced by the Budget and his masterful handling of the House of Commons as leader. His popularity with the rank and file in the House and with the Party in the country had never been so high, but his affection for the Government sank steadily lower. Personal feeling, no doubt, had something to do with this; but his controversies with the Foreign Office had still more. Nor was he in sympathy with the idea of a House of Lords campaign conducted in the present circumstances and under the leadership of Lord Rosebery. The policy of "filling up the cup" had not produced any such collision as would rouse the indignation of the country. It was true that Bills had been rejected, but they were chiefly Irish bills, and Harcourt was convinced that the House of Lords could not be dispossessed on the ground of Ireland. In this he was in agreement with Mr. Morley, with whom, under the influence of a common hostility to the tendencies of the Foreign Office, his relations were resuming something of their former intimacy. "The plain truth is that we can do nothing with the House of Lords unless they really resist the will of the British constituencies—and this they are not now doing," wrote Mr.

Morley to Harcourt (September 21). "I entirely concur with you in the opinion that under the present circumstances and with the Government *as at present constituted* it is simply ridiculous to talk of tackling the House of Lords," replied Harcourt. He himself was doubtful whether there was any future for the Administration, but in so far as he had a card to play it seemed to be Local Option, and he was indignant when in the autumn discussions of the subject Gladstone intervened with a eulogy of the Gothenburg system. Writing to Mr. Morley, he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, *September 24.*— . . . Mr. G. has managed to make what seems to me a fatal mess of the temperance question. Does anybody believe that the real temperance people are going to accept a State traffic in drink *à la Gothenburg* ?

The astounding part of it is that when I was authorized ten years ago to declare for Local Option pure and simple in the Government of 1880, I remember at the close of my speech supporting the motion for which we all voted Mr. G. pulled me by the coat tails and shouted out, "Say you are speaking for the Government." At that time of course Chamberlain's declarations made several years before in favour of the Gothenburg system were perfectly well known. Unfortunately the G.O.M.'s memory on these subjects entirely fails him, and at heart he has always abhorred temperance.

I don't mean to budge one inch from my position on the matter, and shall stand or fall by local option pure and simple, and make a declaration to that effect whenever I find it necessary to speak. . . .

"I don't wonder that you should feel some disgust at Mr. G.'s temperance manifesto," replied Mr. Morley (September 27). "That he should kick over local option, after being head of a Cabinet which ratified your Bill, is really rather strong—almost as bad as Chamberlain's reproaches about the mess made by a Cabinet of which he was a member." Harcourt's general attitude to the Government at the time is revealed in his correspondence with Spencer.

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

MALWOOD, *September 21, 1894.*— . . . I don't know why you should suppose I shall depart from my fixed resolution not to make any public speech. Why should I? You and your friends have informed me sufficiently frankly you do not regard me as fit to lead.

Why then should I pretend to take the initiative only in order that you may repudiate me. As you know I am not a supporter of the present Government. I have a great personal regard for all of you, and contemplate your proceedings with an impartial curiosity and a benevolent neutrality. I quite agree that your position is a difficult one, and I wish you well out of it. But I see that your leader is announced for a good many speeches in which he will no doubt develop his policy with his accustomed clearness—and then you will know what to think and do. It will be quite time enough when your plans are declared for me to consider how far I can support them. Meanwhile I am well content to involve myself in my own obscurity. . . .

*Spencer to Harcourt.*

NORTH CREAKE, FAKENHAM, 26 September.— . . . What you say on politics is sad, and I hope your mood will change. You embarked on the ship, and you are too important to be anything but an active leader of the crew. How can you stand by when important operations have to be considered. If something like cordiality cannot be established between you and Rosebery and others, it is a gloomy prospect which we have before us. These are but my reflections not intended to draw you further. . . .

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

MALWOOD, September 28.— . . . I agree with you that the prospects of the Government are gloomy enough, but that is not my affair. You have made your own beds, and so you ought not to complain if you find them hard to lie upon. It is unreasonable that you should complain that I accept with patience the part which you have assigned to me, and that I do not desire to assume a lead for which I am judged unfit. It has always been my habit not to force myself where I am not wanted. If I have anything worth saying in political affairs it will be to those who trust me and not to those who have no regard for my opinion. As you say I joined the ship, but I was rated *before the mast*, and it is not for me to mount the *bridge*.

In this not very genial frame of mind, Harcourt set out on a visit to Italy with Lewis Harcourt, with whom he had had something approaching a disagreement on the subject of the latter's career. Lewis Harcourt had been anxious that his father should leave politics after the Budget, but failing in this he had refused to consider appointment to the Mint or to accept nomination for Leicester. While his father remained in politics he would remain by his side. Harcourt was keenly disappointed at what he regarded as a

serious sacrifice of his son's prospects to his own convenience ; but he yielded as usual, and the maintenance of their relationship was celebrated by the Italian tour. They visited Como, the Villa d'Este and Venice, and Harcourt's letters to his wife were full of pleasure at the renewal of old experiences. But he could not quite escape the reminders of less pleasing things. " One of the first persons we encountered in the hotel staying here under the same roof," he wrote to Lady Harcourt from Venice, " was Labby himself, Labby, after all our precautions to keep out of his way at Cadenabbia. So I suppose all the papers will ring with *cancans* of the ' Venetian conspiracy,' and it will be said that I joined him to escape the Cabinet."

## CHAPTER XVII

### WAR IN THE CABINET.

The Anglo-Belgian Agreement—Harcourt protests at failure to keep him informed—Protests from Paris and Berlin—Repudiation of Article III—A distracted chargé d'affaires in Paris—Egypt—Distrust of the German Emperor—Importance of good understanding with Russia—The Armenian massacres—A "Little Englander"—The Nicaraguan indemnity—Dangerous situation with France on the Nile—Harcourt makes conditions on foreign policy—Emergence of the South African question.

THROUGHOUT the long struggle over the Budget, Harcourt was engaged in an entirely different conflict with his colleagues, of which the public knew little, but which threatened more than once to result in an explosion that would have brought the Government down. However much the relations of Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were disturbed by incompatibility of temper, violent and impulsive on the one side, fickle and incalculable on the other, their disagreements had deeper roots than mere personal irritation. They represented, in external affairs at all events, two hostile points of view. Ever since the Crimean days Harcourt had been unfaltering in his attachment to the policy of peace as the chief interest of the country. He opposed intervention in continental affairs, except when that intervention was directed towards the attainment of a common European policy, thought that the country already had more colonial responsibilities than was good for it, resisted provocative expenditure on armaments, which he rightly regarded as one of the roots of international distrust, had long ago nailed his colours to the mast of the Blue Water School,<sup>1</sup> and hated Jingoism and

<sup>1</sup> Speaking in the debate on March 20 on the loss of the battleship *Victoria*, which had been rammed by the *Royal Sovereign*, he stated

its "prancing pro-Consuls" in all their manifestations. The introduction of the spirit of Imperialism into the Liberal Party had aroused his most acute resentment, and he had shared to the full the disquiet which Gladstone felt at the earlier indication of Lord Rosebery's attitude at the Foreign Office. Lord Rosebery's contact with public affairs had little reference to domestic concerns; but he had a deep and highly instructed interest in foreign affairs, with definite tendencies of policy that departed sharply from the traditional views of the Liberal Party. He had been one of the founders of the Imperial League, which a few years hence was to blossom into the Liberal Imperial League, and the attractions of his glittering personality had given an impulse in the Party to a train of thought which filled the old-fashioned Liberal of the Cobden and Gladstone tradition with concern.

Imperialism was becoming fashionable, and it was becoming fashionable at a critical time. The new hostile formation on the Continent was taking shape—the Triple Alliance on one side, France and Russia on the other—and feeling in France was still embittered by what were

his general view of the function and significance of the Navy:

"I will state one of the great reasons why, in my opinion, the supremacy of the British Navy is a great element in the preservation of peace for this country. The great fear and danger for this country are that we should find ourselves in a position in which, from a want of sense of security and strength, we should involve ourselves in the complications of Europe and the great military powers. If this country felt that it was not independent, that it was not strong, that it could not stand alone, it might be forced into European combinations or complications from which it would be most desirable to stand aside. I have always regarded the great model, the great example for all civilized countries to be the policy of the United States established by George Washington a hundred years ago. That was a policy of peace, a policy of abstention from complications in other countries. What was the security of that policy? It was the Atlantic that rolled between America and Europe. If you have a superior Navy you may have as great a guarantee of your own neutrality as the Atlantic affords to the United States. I desire that the Navy should be strong in order that we may be neutral, and not be called on to combine on matters in which we have no interest at all, simply for want of strength to support our own independence."

supposed to be the pro-German leanings of British policy, begun under the Salisbury Government and continued under the Rosebery régime. The situation was rendered the more delicate by the unredeemed pledge of British withdrawal from Egypt, and by the competition between the Powers for desirable places in the sun in Central Africa. Harcourt had no continental predilections. He had been strongly anti-Napoleon, but not anti-French, during the reign of Louis Napoleon, but since then his attitude to all the Powers had been singularly free from partiality or preference. He was neither pro-German nor pro-French, and he was entirely opposed to exclusive friendships which implied potential antagonisms. It was because he suspected that foreign policy under Lord Rosebery was assuming a certain anti-French bias that, after the leadership crisis, he sought, first, to have the Foreign Secretaryship in the House of Commons, and when that was found to be impracticable laid down rigorous conditions designed to secure that he, as Leader of the House of Commons, would be kept in close touch with all the movements of the Foreign Office.

It was an arrangement which was easily liable to breach, whether intentional or unintentional, especially in the susceptible atmosphere of the time, and events speedily provided the occasion. It arose from developments in Central Africa. The future of the control of the sources of the Nile was still the danger point of international affairs, and it was its bearing upon that problem that gave the question of Uganda significance. The mission of Sir Gerald Portal to that country had resulted in conclusions which led the Government to decide to establish a British Protectorate there, and it fell to Harcourt (April 12) to announce the fact to the House of Commons. He had yielded to the weight of opinion on the subject and to the arguments for the need of a settled control of the country in the interests both of the natives and of the white faction; but he had yielded without enthusiasm, and was in no mood for further developments in the same field. But other developments were in progress.

At the end of March Harcourt received from the Foreign Secretary the following letter :

*Kimberley to Harcourt.*

35, LOWNDES SQUARE, *March 28, 1894.*—I think you ought to know that we are engaged in secret negotiations with the King of the Belgians with a view to transfer to him under a long lease our "sphere of influence" on the Upper Nile. The object is to prevent the French, who are about to send an expedition across Africa to that region, from establishing themselves there, and to settle with the Belgians, who are there already, the questions arising out of our claims to a sphere of influence in that quarter.

The arrangement, if we can carry it through, appears to me to present many advantages. We shall have a friendly neighbour ; we shall not be under pressure to extend our operations in that district ; we shall prevent the French from interfering. The presence of the French there would be a serious danger to Egypt, and might easily involve us in complications with them. I can at any time give you verbally any further explanations you may desire.

Harcourt was at the moment immersed in the final preparations for his Budget, and it may be overlooked the gravity of the communication. It was not until three weeks later, on receiving the terms of the transfer of rights, that he wrote :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

11, DOWNING STREET, *April 22.*— . . . The matter for me at least has assumed a most serious aspect, and I must bring it before the Cabinet on Tuesday, and on their decision will depend whether I continue in my present position in the House of Commons.

You know that when I undertook the lead of the House of Commons I stipulated for and received a distinct assurance that I was to be kept in full and constant knowledge of all important transactions in the Foreign Office from their initiation, so that nothing of importance was to be done without my privy.

I regard this Belgian Agreement as a distinct breach of that promise. When you hinted to me that something of the kind was going on I indicated my doubts as to the policy.

I fully expected, and permit me to say I had the right to expect, that I should have been fully informed before it went on to completion. As you know I have never been allowed to see the document before it was signed. If I had I should have strongly protested against it, and required that it should be brought before the Cabinet, and I myself am informed of it as a concluded affair in a circulation box ten days after the signature of the Agreement.



You professed to inform the Cabinet at its last meeting of what was going on in the Foreign Office, and were absolutely silent on this Agreement, which was then signed. The mutilation of the Postal Report (which I accidentally discussed), and this second Agreement kept back from me and from the Cabinet till it is too late to discuss it have left on my mind the most painful impression.

It is a course of proceeding which in my opinion is not consistent with the assurance given to me, and must discharge me from all responsibility for the affairs of the Foreign Office and their defence in the House of Commons.

I must request that this treaty shall be published at once, and that I shall be at liberty to take such steps as I think fit with regard to it.

The House of Commons has a right to expect that I shall answer to them as to the foreign policy of the Government. The only answer that I can now return is that the Foreign Office policy of the Government is transacted by the First Lord of the Treasury and the Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords, and that they take particular care that I shall know nothing of these foreign affairs.

Kimberley pointed out that, after his earlier communication, he had assumed that Harcourt, if he desired further explanations, would have asked for them, but Harcourt insisted that by the terms of the arrangement, the Agreement should have come to the Leader of the House of Commons as a matter of course before any decisive steps were taken. His resentment was strengthened by the conviction that the Agreement was a grave mistake. "I find that J. Morley and Asquith entirely share my views on this subject," he wrote to Kimberley. "In our opinion it (the Treaty) creates a most dangerous situation with regard to France, and under circumstances which, when they become known, will be most discreditable to the English Government as well as to that of Belgium." The Journal records:

*April 23.*—There has been a Sunday of "crisis" between W. V. H. and Kimberley. The latter (with R.) has concluded a secret treaty with the King of the Belgians, granting to the King a lease of the territories in Central Africa on the Upper Nile (Wadelai, etc.). This fact was not communicated to W. V. H. at the Cabinet, although the treaty was signed 10 days ago. W. V. H. says he will not consent to the secrecy of the treaty, and will not defend it in the H. of C. He demanded a Cabinet, which met at 12 to-day. W. V. H. explained the whole situation to the Cabinet, which took them considerably by surprise, and they almost unanimously sided with

him. It seems it will be impossible to recall the treaty, but Percy Anderson is to go to Brussels to-night to see if the King of the Belgians can be induced to give it up. J. Morley was angry and much alarmed at the action of the F.O., and asked, "What will France think and do on this?" [H.]

The storm was intensified a few days later by the announcement that Major Owen had planted the British flag at Wadelai, and established a chain of forts as far as the Albert Nyanza. Harcourt protested against an unwarrantable extension of the Uganda programme, which had no authority from the Cabinet and was entirely irreconcilable even with the Belgian secret treaty, which assumed that the Belgians were in occupation of Wadelai. He was "astounded" the next day (May 8) to discover that ever since the previous 10th of August instructions to our representative at Uganda had been in force directing him to send emissaries into the district of the Nile basin who would be authorized "to negotiate any treaties that may be necessary for its protection," and that "forms of treaty were enclosed for the purpose." He demanded to know who was consulted before these instructions were sent and why they were endorsed "not to be printed," and received from Kimberley a letter from Lord Rosebery saying that he was responsible for the instructions, and that they could not have left the Foreign Office without his approval. Thereupon Harcourt sent to Kimberley (May 14) a strongly worded protest, from which I quote one paragraph:

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

. . . (4) In Rosebery's letter of the 12th inst. he takes a new ground. He says, "I sent the instructions on my responsibility as Foreign Minister without consultation so far as I know with any of my colleagues." That is to say without the knowledge at the time or subsequently either of the Prime Minister or of the Cabinet. It appears by Sanderson's Memorandum of the 11th inst. that the order "not to print" effectually withheld the knowledge of the transaction before and after from the Cabinet, though we were all in London and could have been consulted. In my opinion if these instructions had been made known to Mr. Gladstone he would have dissented from them, and if they had been referred to the Cabinet they would then, as they have done now, have disapproved them.

The claim therefore is that the Foreign Secretary may set aside the judgment of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, and give without their knowledge instructions of the gravest consequence which are contrary to their opinion.

I believe such a pretension to be absolutely inconsistent with the traditions of English administration, and it was finally condemned in the well-known case of Lord Palmerston in 1851. . . .

The issue touched the fundamentals of government, and on that issue Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were *potes* asunder. Foreign policy, as Harcourt understood, ultimately governed every other aspect of policy, and its withdrawal from the control of the Cabinet struck a deadly blow at the whole principle of representative government. Diplomacy, in the existing condition of the world, must necessarily be secret within certain limits and up to a certain stage; but Harcourt drew a sharp line between secrecy from the general public and secrecy from the Cabinet, which was the constitutional guardian of the public interest, and of which the Foreign Minister, like the Chancellor of the Exchequer in finance, or the First Lord of the Admiralty in naval matters, was the executive officer. No minister fought for his own hand in the Cabinet with more passion and even violence than Harcourt did, or threatened resignation with a more fluent vocabulary; but when he was overruled he accepted the constitutional situation, and made himself the official voice of a judgment which was not his own. Even at this time he was piloting through the House of Commons naval estimates which he had resisted with furious vehemence in his discussions with the Admiralty during the winter, and there was no hint in his public attitude that he had ever disagreed with them. This view of Cabinet control seemed to him to apply with especial authority to a department upon whose conduct depended the issues of peace and war, the spirit of international relationship, and, ultimately, the whole character of internal as well as external policy. The contrary view represented an attack on the Ark of the Covenant, and that that view was in some measure held by Lord Rosebery was evidenced both by his words and his actions. He believed that the administration

of foreign affairs by the Cabinet had been the cause of past disasters, and though he had become Prime Minister, foreign affairs still continued to form his only real attachment to public life. He knew that in some quarters his elevation to the Premiership in preference to Harcourt had been advocated as a means of removing him from the Foreign Office. Mr. Morley himself was supposed to have been influenced by this among other considerations. But Lord Rosebery, with his complete divorce from the House of Commons in which he had never sat, and with his slender and uncertain hold upon domestic politics, was naturally anxious to preserve some of his authority in the sphere which really engaged his mind and for which he had an undeniable *flair*.

Meanwhile the Anglo-Belgian Agreement had been signed at Brussels by the King of the Belgians. Harcourt continued his protests, and his case was strengthened by the fact that Belgian public opinion was not behind the King in the matter, and that the Belgian people repudiated an arrangement which threatened their peace with their neighbours. "I am not surprised," wrote Harcourt to Kimberley (June 6), "that the Belgians are alarmed at the united hostility of France and Germany. I pointed this out as a certainty from the first, as the inevitable consequence of the Treaty. It provoked and will necessarily result in a general African row, and will require a recasting of the whole situation. It gives both Germany and France just the opportunity they wanted of repudiating the existing arrangements." It had been assumed that Germany would not object to the Agreement, but she, like France, promptly brought pressure to bear on Belgium, and the King of the Belgians, finding himself between two fires, was naturally anxious to know what support he could look for from England. Writing to the Foreign Secretary, who had sent him the proposed reply, Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

HOUSE OF COMMONS, June 12, 1894.—The despatch of Plunkett of the 10th inst. conveys the direct question by the King of the

Belgians (which I have always foreseen would be the result of the transaction), viz., "Will England go to war with France, to maintain the Anglo-Belgian Convention?" Whenever this question comes to issue I have no hesitation in meeting it with an emphatic "No."

It is quite idle to treat the question as an invasion of "British territory."

A sphere of influence is not territory. It is a mere agreement between contracting parties not to interfere with one another within certain limits. It binds nobody but the parties to such agreement; and France is no party to the agreement. . . .

The draft reply seems by implication to suggest that it is possible when we receive "more explicit information" that we shall give the King of the Belgians an answer in the sense which he desires, viz., that if he will stick to us and the Anglo-Belgian treaty we shall be prepared to fight it out for him with France.

This is a position to which we are *resolutely opposed*, and we think it unfair that the King of the Belgians should be left under a false impression on this matter.

There can now be no manner of doubt that Germany and France will jointly or severally demand the abandonment of the Treaty. M. Hanotaux has declared this in the French Chamber; the German Emperor has told the same thing to our Ambassador at Berlin. To lead the King of the Belgians to suppose that we are going to fight to enable him to resist Germany and France is to deceive him, because we all know we shall do nothing of the kind. John Morley, Asquith and I are all agreed—and so I believe would be the rest of the Cabinet—that we should avoid these *ambiguas voces* and simply reply to this despatch "that we have offered to France a friendly discussion of all questions at issue between us and them, and that therefore we cannot entertain the question of such a conflict as that suggested by the King of the Belgians."

That the King will have to retire sooner or later from the position into which we have thrust him—or he has thrust us—I think cannot be doubted. The sooner he gets out of it the better it will be for him, for assuredly if he remains the French will kick him out. . . .

A very great deal depends on the tone of this despatch. We are *very decidedly* of opinion that it ought to give an *absolute go-by* to the question suggested, and simply to state that we are endeavouring to arrange all the questions *à l'aimable* with France.

The attempt to settle this matter with France *à deux* will not succeed, because Germany has declared that the Anglo-Belgian Treaty—even as modified—is injurious to her interests, so that no settlement of the question can be arrived at without the intervention of Germany (and probably of the Sultan); so that, as the German Emperor says, unless the Treaty is abandoned, there must be a conference, and at that conference, which must involve a new partition of Africa, we shall be in a minority of one.

In the meantime Germany had informed the King of the Belgians that if he did not withdraw from the Agreement Germany would cease to consider the Congo State as neutral and take whatever other steps she might think proper. The authors of the Treaty, now rather in a panic, hastily advised the King of the Belgians to ask for the withdrawal of Article III of the Convention, which would have met the German objection, communicating the fact to Harcourt after the despatch of the instructions to the Minister in Brussels. Harcourt forthwith wrote :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

11, DOWNING STREET, July 16.—I must most seriously protest against things of such capital importance as the telegram to Plunkett, which you have just sent me, being despatched without consultation with the Cabinet and personally with myself as Leader of the House of Commons. Of course I agree with the cancelling of one-half of this agreement, but the tearing up of it in small pieces instead of dealing with it as a whole is in my opinion an impolitic course which only exposes us to fresh humiliation. The demand of the French, fortified by our retreat before Germany, for the cancelling of the rest of the agreement will be instant and irresistible. It will only make our position in Europe more disastrous than it would have been if a more direct course had been taken. Do you really believe that after Hanotaux's speech he will allow you to refuse to France what you have been compelled to yield to Germany ?

The answer to the question came with the presentation of the French note. "It is clear that this serious business is coming to an immediate issue," wrote Harcourt to Kimberley (August 9), continuing :

. . . The whole origin of the mess in which we find ourselves lies in the policy of concealment adopted from the first. There were four parties who ought to have been consulted :—

1. The Cabinet.
2. The French Government.
3. The German Government.
4. The Porte.

If No. 1 had been consulted the difficulty would never have arisen. I think that with the exception of Rosebery and yourself we were unanimously of opinion that the previous consent of Germany and France was an indispensable condition of such a transaction, and that the Agreement without their consent would inevitably be repudiated.

That has already taken place in respect of Germany, and will, inevitably and with equal reason, be followed up by France. The tone of the French note is very moderate, and its argument seems to me unanswerable. It relies :—

(1) On the proposition that the Congo State could not alter its status as a neutral power without the assent of all the guaranteeing Governments. To this there can be no reply. It is the ground taken by Germany to which we have already succumbed.

(2) The satirical commentary on the "life estate" of the King of the Belgians as "une sorte de détention à titre personnel des pays et des peuples qui lui sont réunis en location. Qu'arrivera-t-il en cas de décès du locataire ?" is unanswerable.

(3) The statement that by "le droit international Africain" no State can pretend to any right of sovereignty or property in territory over which it has not established a real and effective occupation in the absence of rights conceded by express convention between the parties interested. This proposition cannot be disputed—least of all by Rosebery who relied *on it* in his speech of 1891 as demonstrating the invalidity of our "sphere of influence" as against France, who was not a consenting or conventional party to it. The right, therefore, to lease a territory in which Great Britain had no real or effective occupation cannot be maintained—at least as against France.

(4) The claim that France, in virtue of its right of *preemption*, had a special claim to be considered in any modification of the status of the Congo is not unreasonable. . . .

Nothing has occurred to alter the opinion which you know I have held from the first moment that I became acquainted with this Agreement that in the absence of the consent of France and Germany it cannot be sustained in argument or in fact.

"We had a decisive Cabinet to-day on Congo," wrote Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt two days later. "The French had demanded a final answer from the Belgians as to abandonment of the Treaty. The King of the B.'s asked, or rather prayed our leave to accept, which we have sent—so there is an end of that business. It all came on suddenly on Saturday. You may imagine there were some people not pleased." The Agreement was practically annulled by the later Franco-Belgian agreement on the northern limits of the Congo Free State, by which the King of the Belgians got a footing on the left bank of the White Nile opposite Lado.

But though the Belgian match had been taken away from

the Central African powder magazine, the magazine remained, and throughout the autumn the discussions with France on the question of the British "sphere" on the Upper Nile continued, and there were evidences that Germany was disposed to make common cause with France on colonial questions. There is an amusing description of the diplomatic play in Paris in a letter from Harcourt on his return from a holiday in Switzerland :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

MALWOOD, September 12, 1894.—I have returned from Switzerland rather sooner than I expected.

As I passed through Paris I saw Phipps at the Embassy, and heard something of his proceedings. I confess that the diplomatic situation did not impress me. I have no doubt that Phipps has all the domestic virtues possible, but *vis-à-vis* of the wily Hanotaux he is like a mouse affording cruel sport to the cat. He seemed to me to be groping his way in the dark without instruction.

I do not quite understand the situation or the *raison d'être* of Dufferin. Here we are assuming to be attaining a general settlement of a dozen questions with France all of more or less considerable importance. The country goes to enormous expense in maintaining what is called a diplomatic service, which is presumed to possess supreme experience and intelligence. But at the most critical moment our ambassador to Paris is out of the field. I had supposed that negotiations had been in abeyance in his absence, but I learned to my surprise that the whole question is now in active discussion with the French Cabinet, which is in full session, and that Phipps is conducting it. He showed me his despatch to you of Sept. 5th, and he seemed to hug himself with the belief that all was for the best in the best possible of chancelleries. But confidence is a plant of slow growth in an aged bosom like mine. It was obvious to me that Hanotaux was laughing in his sleeve at Great Britain and its chargé d'affaires.

I had for some time observed that whenever allusion was made to a recognition of the English "sphere of influence" the French Minister quietly put the question aside. He is sagaciously pursuing the same game. When Phipps invited him to accept our "sphere of influence" he asked the pertinent question, "Which is your sphere?" He said that under the Geneva Agreement of 1890 it had a southern, an eastern and a western boundary, but, said the sagacious Hanotaux, "What is its northern limit?" This is a question I have myself often asked in Cabinet without obtaining any definite reply.

Phipps seems to have told him (though as he admitted without



instructions) that it was the line drawn in the Anglo-Belgian lease. Probably Percy Anderson would draw it at Alexandria.

Hanotaux then seems to have put forward his real position. He said (and it seems to me with unanswerable force), "You made your arrangements with Germany in 1890. You never asked our consent or even communicated to us. (This was Rosebery's argument in 1890.) We know nothing of your arrangements with Germany. We do not recognize them. For us all the territory not reduced into possession by occupation is *terra media* open to us as to all the world. If you want any special recognition of your rights by us you must give us consideration for it. You have offered us nothing—or at least nothing that is adequate. What will you give for our admission of your 'sphere'?"

To which the innocent Phipps replied, "Oh, we are about to occupy the Bahr el Ghazal ourselves very soon from Uganda." At which, *ce cher Phipps* says Hanotaux smiled. And well he might! I confess I had some difficulty in keeping my countenance. Phipps evidently had bright visions of the Life Guards pounding in the Bahr el Ghazal. I advised him not to assume that was an operation which was likely to be immediately effected.

Phipps's mind is evidently filled with the notion that we can buy and should buy the recognition of our sphere by some cession of territory to France. But what territory? He spoke of some islands (of which I have never heard) but to which it appears the Admiralty attach great importance. He then suggested the Gambia as an offering to France. I know very little about the Gambia. I dare say it is worth very little, but it is in eyes of the British Jingo an English possession—it is a bird in hand, and presumably preferable to a "sphere" in the bush. . . .

I have little doubt that Hanotaux only hung out these false lights to beguile the simple Phipps. I am very confident that France will never on any conditions that we could offer consent to shut herself out from access to the Upper Nile. As Phipps showed me on the map she is nearer to the Nile at or about Lado than we are at Uganda, and in greater force.

The absurd part of the whole thing is that no one at this moment has the smallest intention of occupying any of this territory. We shall not. France has no present intention. Belgium is not there and does not mean to go there. The whole thing is mere bluff and blague, and altogether unworthy of the serious diplomacy of great States. The Uganda boom has very much blown over, and it will probably eventuate in becoming a squalid derelict like Cyprus—Dizzy's *place d'armes*—from which we are withdrawing our last company of infantry—and the nominal nucleus of the civilization of Asia Minor, whilst the Cypriotes complain that they are worse off than when we went there.

But in the meantime I foresee that unless we take care we are

about to make a serious diplomatic fiasco. The final result of the negotiation will probably be that we shall have advanced a claim to a "sphere of influence" which France will formally repudiate, and the last end of the Anglo-Belgian Convention of May will be worse than the first, and we shall appear ridiculous in the eyes of Europe. For this reason (and not from any intrinsic importance of the question) I hope that matters may be taken in hand in a more serious and business-like manner. We have been snubbed enough, and we cannot afford to endure more rebuffs. . . .

## II

It was not only the attitude of France which was giving concern to the Foreign Office during these months. Our relations with her were still, as they continued to be for some years, the main source of disquiet, and Harcourt was sensible that the chief root of the disturbance lay in our failure to carry out the policy of withdrawal from Egypt. He resisted any step which made the fulfilment of that understanding more difficult or which seemed to imply that annexation was the ultimate policy, and when Cromer proposed that the cost of the Army of Occupation in Egypt should be removed from the Egyptian Government and charged upon the British Exchequer, he wrote to Kimberley (October 31) an indignant remonstrance against what he regarded as "the boldest move in the direction of annexation which has yet been attempted. It is one, in my opinion (he continued), that it would be impossible to defend upon any principle we have hitherto avowed in regard to our occupation of Egypt, and therefore if a telegraphic reply is required I have no difficulty in saying that it should be in the briefest possible shape of an emphatic 'No.'" He entirely distrusted Cromer's appeals to "violent courses" which would commit us deeper in Egypt. "I do not know whether the Khedive inspires the hostile press in Cairo," he wrote to Kimberley. "I am quite sure that Cromer inspires the hostile press in London." He was the more concerned to minimize the grounds of difficulty with France in Africa because he was becoming sensible of other clouds on the foreign horizon. Writing to Kimberley, he said :

11, DOWNING STREET, November 16.— . . . It is clear to me that for some reason or other we have to count on the negative if not positive hostility of Germany.

This is an element which must be carefully borne in mind in our dealings with France on African questions. We may be sure that if Germany has the opportunity of tripping us up, it will be done.

It seems plain enough that the Triple Alliance is used up, and that fresh combinations are in view, and the disappearance of Caprivi and the supposed recrudescence of Bismarck is a suspicious symptom.

It is very fortunate that Russia is not (for the present at least) a disturbing factor. But we must walk *very warily*. We have never been so destitute of friends or so "*mal vu*" by the Powers.

The less we attempt any move which requires their friendly co-operation the better—for we assuredly shall not get it.

He was disturbed by new protests in Central and Eastern Europe. "There were three men who were the principal props of tranquillity in Europe," he wrote to Kimberley, "the late Czar, Caprivi and Kalnoky. Two of them are gone, and the last seems shaky. I confess I look upon the state of things in Germany and our relations to it with much anxiety." His anxiety was increased by the record of a conversation which the German Emperor had had with Colonel Swaine. Writing to Kimberley (November 20), he said :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

. . . The fact that such a personage should engage in a conversation of this gravity with an individual in the position of Col. Swaine is truly alarming. The levity with which questions of such difficulty and danger are flung about shows the instability of European affairs. The statement [by the Kaiser] that "Russia could have seized Constantinople at any time in these last five or six years if she had been desirous to do so" is truly astonishing ; and that she did not do so "because she does not any more long for Constantinople."

. . . I have always been of opinion that it is the Russians who have most to fear from the opening of the Dardanelles to the fleets of Europe, and that they have much more to lose by our admission to the Black Sea than they have to gain by access to the Mediterranean. I often discussed this matter with Schuvaloff and he was of that opinion, and I know that this proposal, which it was intended to put forward at the Treaty of Berlin, was withdrawn on that ground. A British fleet in the Black Sea would open Russia to our attack and make her far more vulnerable than she now is. But the declaration of indifference on the part of Germany on this question and her disposition to leave Austria in the lurch goes far

beyond Bismarck's celebrated speech about the "Pomeranian peasant," and is a most serious element in the European situation. . . .

"I agree with you," replied Kimberley (November 21), "that H.M.'s [the German Emperor's] impulsive character is a very disturbing influence in affairs. . . . His words must be taken *cum grano* always, as he does not weigh them ; but weighed or not, the words of the master of many legions are not to be lightly regarded." The delicacy of the discussions with Germany at this time is indicated by a passage from a letter of Kimberley's to Harcourt (December 7), in which he said :

. . . As to my conversation with Hatzfeldt [the German Ambassador] and our relations with Germany there is really nothing of any importance which you do not know, except perhaps an observation which I made to Hatzfeldt when he said that Germany would not "*permit*" us to annex the Portuguese East African colonies, if Portugal ceased to hold them.

I said, "You must recollect that England is a great Sea Power and could in such a matter 'speak the strongest' word"; to which Hatzfeldt replied, "Yes, but we could make our power felt elsewhere." To which I rejoined that I quite agreed and all the more reason that we should not disagree, especially as we both desired now to maintain the *status quo*. . . .

"I have very little doubt that the German Emperor is annoyed at our *rapprochement* to Russia," wrote Harcourt to Kimberley, "and is mooting the question of the Dardanelles in hopes of breeding bad blood in that quarter." Harcourt himself had always, since the Crimean episode, been opposed to the traditional hostility of this country to Russia, and had sympathized with her claim to be the protector of the Christian communities on her southern borders. "The key to the enigma," he wrote to Kimberley, "is a good understanding with Russia, a thing we have never yet tried, but which is now happily within our reach. No doubt Germany and France will do their best to thwart it, but if we stick firmly to it the Eastern question will be a much less dangerous one than it has been heretofore." And, writing to the Prince of Wales to congratulate him on his return from "your melancholy journey to Russia"

(whither he and the Princess had been to attend the obsequies of the Tsar), he said :

*Harcourt to the Prince of Wales.*

MALWOOD, LYNTHURST, *December 6, 1894.*— . . . Those who are best acquainted with the difficulties and dangers which environ the international relations of Europe must highly appreciate the great service which Your Royal Highness has been able to render to your country by the establishment, not only in fact but (what is not less important) in public opinion and sentiments, of the most intimate and friendly relations with Russia. This is an experiment which has never yet been fairly tried in foreign affairs, and it is my humble opinion that there is none which is more likely to minister to the cause of peace and goodwill.

But while he was anxious to promote a new feeling in Anglo-Russian relations, he was no more disposed to create difficulties with Germany than he was disposed to create them in the case of France. "There is nothing so impolitic as to irritate great Powers on small subjects," he wrote to Kimberley, in referring to the emergence of the Samoan question. "If we could give Germany Heligoland, which was British soil, why not Samoa, which only belongs to R. L. Stevenson ?" And two days later he wrote :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

MALWOOD, *December 8.*— . . . Surely this Samoa grain of sand ought not to be allowed to put the European machine out of gear. I think Salisbury was very wise in making his Anglo-German arrangement in 1890.

We cannot be surprised if great Powers are irritated at our advancing a claim to the exclusive possession of the Pacific Ocean and its islands, to supremacy in the Mediterranean, to the proprietorship of Africa and the dominion of Asia.

Surely a little give and take in these matters would be wise. We have already got the lion's share ; why should we insist upon taking the tiger's also ? Not to say the jackal's.

The claim of New Zealand to annex Samoa is really too absurd. These colonial gentlemen expect us to quarrel on their behalf with the great military Powers of Europe, and to add millions to our expenditure, to which they refuse to contribute a single farthing, and leave the whole burden to fall on the English taxpayer.

The troubled waters of European diplomacy were disturbed at this time by an event of much more gravity than the

Samoa question. The Turkish massacre of Armenians at Erzerum had shocked the public opinion of Europe, and the sense of horror was deepened by the fact that the principal instruments of the massacre had been decorated by the Sultan. The memory of the Bulgarian atrocities was still fresh in the public mind, and feeling in England, indignant at this fresh evidence of the incurable misgovernment of the Turk, demanded drastic redress. Harcourt, constant to his idea of concerted European action in dealing with the Ottoman Empire, was anxious that the matter should be taken in hand by the signatories to the Berlin Treaty ; but the Sultan embarked on his familiar expedient of playing off the rivalries and jealousies of the Powers, and Currie, the British Ambassador at Constantinople, did not show much firmness in dealing with him. Writing to Kimberley (December 2), Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

MALWOOD, December 2, 1894.— . . . From first to last he (Currie) has been like wax in the fingers of Said Pasha, and has absolutely disregarded the instructions given him from home.

He first of all proposes the Chermiside mission and then withdraws it—the first serious blunder. He then accepts the Turkish Commission without taking any precautions to ascertain its constitution or instructions. When the notification comes forth in a shape which we all agree was a direct slap in the face to us he proposes consular intervention at Erzerum ; the Cabinet meet and determine more vigorous action shall be taken ; he receives definite instructions to deliver a protest on behalf of the English Government, which he has not delivered, and to consult the French and Russian Ministers at Constantinople, which he has not done.

Having failed to carry out the instructions of the Cabinet he then receives from Said Pasha a proposal which, taking the circumstances into consideration, is, I think, the most offensive that one Government ever made to another, viz., to ignore the British Government in the transaction altogether ; to treat their remonstrances with contempt, and to pass over all the statements which our Consul has made and to say in short, “ we will have nothing to say to you, you are prejudiced and untrustworthy ; we will hand the affair over to the United States, who are people who deserve to be treated with some respect.”

I reckon myself as a man of peace in foreign affairs. In fact I am one of those mean-spirited “ Little Englanders who have

ceased to exist," but there is a point of humiliation at which even my gorge rises, and we have swallowed our full peck of dirt in this business, and it is time we should have some regard to our own dignity and self-respect and not allow our nose to be tweaked by the Grand Turk, unless we mean to allow ourselves to be the laughing-stock of Constantinople and of Europe.

It is quite obvious what the object of the Sultan is, viz., to give the go-by to the European guarantee at Berlin for the fair treatment of the Armenians. That was what P. Currie was instructed by the Cabinet to put forward.

That is what the Porte is determined to evade, and to shunt the matter to the other side of the Atlantic to be dealt with by the U.S., who have no interest or obligations in the matter. But the most astounding part of the whole performance is that P. Currie should, in the direct teeth of his instructions, have practically accepted this impudent proposal without any reference home. He wrote to the United States Minister, and asked him "whom he would propose to name." . . .

"Currie has been too ready to make things easy for the Porte, tho' I don't think he deserves all the hard things you say of him," said Kimberley in reply, adding that "an appeal to the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin would almost certainly fail, and failure would be not only a rebuff, but would be to give a triumph to the Sultan." Fortunately the United States declined to act, and Harcourt, at enormous length and with characteristic passion, argued afresh for "a direct appeal to the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin to take common action in this matter." "You have given me a good scolding," replied Kimberley (December 5), "on which I can only say that I kiss the rod." Meanwhile another torrent was on its way from Malwood, couched in this energetic sort of language: "Really the conduct of our foreign affairs is deplorable, and we tumble into one scrape after another. . . . The reports of our Consul on the spot are horrible and heartrending, and the whole thing is being as much mismanaged as it is possible to conceive." In the end a commission set up "to inquire into the criminal conduct of Armenian brigands" found that there had been no revolt that would explain or justify the massacres, and Great Britain, supported, though not vigorously, by France and Russia, demanded a programme of reform in the

Armenian vilayets. This was met by counter-proposals, whereupon a definite demand was made on May 11, 1895. There for the moment we will leave a subject which was to become later intimately interwoven with the question of the Liberal leadership.

It is important, in considering his various disagreements with the Foreign Office, which contributed so largely to the disaster towards which the Government were moving, to remember the sources of Harcourt's disquiet. Foreign policy was the master key of government. It involved peace or war, expenditure on armaments, the measure of taxation, and, consequentially, the character of internal policy. Throughout his career Harcourt's powerful mind had followed the movements of the world with extraordinary acumen and understanding, and nearly fifty years' study at close quarters of European diplomacy had confirmed him in definite conclusions as to the best policy for his own country and for the world. He was, in the best sense of the word, that foolishly derided person "a Little Englander," and he rejoiced in the description. His conception of the function of his country in the affairs of Europe was that of the peace-maker, the smotherer of irritations, the friendly policeman of a rather disorderly mob. A passionate lover of his own country, he was, like Gladstone and Cobden, an international man, who believed that peace and goodwill among the nations was the universal blessing and that militarism was the universal enemy. His attitude to the continental Powers was that of benevolent impartiality, and he was hostile to friendships which implied antagonisms. Holding these views, he was disquieted by the tendencies on both sides of the Channel which seemed to foreshadow a sinister departure from the Liberal policy that would either leave us the general subject of the hostility or involve us in the tangled web of European alliances. Our enormous holdings in the world were beginning to inspire a common envy, and the claims we were setting up to the spoils of Africa seemed to him provocative and indefensible. His concern was aggravated by the new Imperialism which was permeating the



Liberal Party. If it was not the flamboyant Jingoism of Disraeli, it was akin to it, and he suspected that its fruits would not be very different. It was these considerations which led to his increasing absorption in the problems of foreign affairs. The tide was flowing against the Gladstonian tradition to which he clung, and he was sensible that his powers of resistance were weakened by the fact that the crucial positions were all in the House of Lords. The Prime Minister was there, the Foreign Secretary was there, the First Lord of the Admiralty was there. Neither Kimberley nor Spencer, it was true, could be suspected of Jingo sympathies, but they were out of touch with the more Liberal spirit of the House of Commons, and were more easily subject to influences which Harcourt profoundly distrusted.

These facts explain the intensity with which he argued a case which he knew was going against him. Europe was drifting into strange and perilous waters, and we were drifting with it. He was incessant in his warnings, and his warnings were always appeals to the fundamental doctrines of Liberal policy. Thus, when Kimberley had sent him information of new assurances to the Shah of Persia, he wrote to him :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

11, DOWNING STREET, January 11, 1895.— . . . These secret agreements are very dangerous and mischievous. They are promises made like pie-crusts for the purpose of being broken ; they are in themselves impolitic, and when the time comes for putting them in force are found to be impracticable. If this "assurance" means anything, it means a territorial guarantee of Persia against Russia—a guarantee which we all know very well would never be seriously put into operation.

And when a quarrel arose with Nicaragua in reference to the treatment of certain British subjects he objected to the use of force. An indemnity of £15,500 was demanded from the Nicaraguan Government for the expulsion of a British vice-consul. Arbitration was asked for by Nicaragua, but refused. "I confess," he wrote to Kimberley, "I have an invincible repugnance to using force in a case of small

indemnities like the present, especially when we are dealing with a feeble State and arbitration is offered." He desired the opinion of the Cabinet taken on the subject, and in a further letter said :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

MALWOOD, *April 17, 1895.*— . . . I cannot conceive that after writing a highfaluting letter of the most gushing description to the Tsar, exhorting him to propound a scheme of universal arbitration, and having commenced a sort of negotiation with the United States with the same object, we are going to stultify ourselves by coming down on Nicaragua with force of arms to settle a paltry amount of pecuniary compensation. If there ever was a subject on which arbitration was proper it would be on a money question of this sort, the *amende* having been made on everything else. . . .

"Rosebery thinks it impossible to collect the Cabinet together at this moment for the purpose of considering the Nicaraguan proposal, and we are both strongly of opinion that it is not a case for arbitration," replied Kimberley (*April 19*) to Harcourt's suggestion. Thereupon Harcourt wrote :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

MALWOOD, *April 18, 1895.*— . . . After the assurance you had given me that the Cabinet should be consulted before forcible measures were resorted to in Nicaragua I can only regard your letter of the 17th received to-day (to employ your favourite phrase) as a highly "unfriendly proceeding."

The refusal of Lord Rosebery to reserve a question of this importance for the Cabinet on the request of the Foreign Secretary and the remonstrance of the Leader of the House of Commons is, according to my experience, without precedent.

Unfortunately it is entirely in accordance with the course which, from the origin of this Government, and notably in the case of the Anglo-Belgian Convention, has been pursued towards myself and the members of the Cabinet in the House of Commons.

It is in direct breach of the understanding on which I consented to be responsible for the Government in the House of Commons. I must directly traverse your statement that this Cabinet ever authorized the proceedings you and Lord Rosebery have adopted. In my opinion the exact opposite is the fact. It was distinctly understood that all hostile action was to be postponed till the answer from Nicaragua was received and considered, and of this you personally assured me yourself some weeks ago.

As a fact that Government has now made the *amende* in respect

of the principal grievance, and the only question now in issue is the amount of damages to be recovered. Whether this is a matter to be settled *vi et armis* is a thing which the Cabinet have never had an opportunity of considering, and which they ought to have determined. Every day's experience more and more convinces me that there is no desire to place the working of the Government as between its representatives in the House of Lords and the House of Commons on a fair and friendly footing, but that there is a fixed intention to forestall decisions and to commit the Government to courses which the Cabinet have had no opportunity to consider.

This is conduct against which I have found it necessary constantly to protest, and which is becoming every day more intolerable.

It only remains for me to consider what is the best method of dealing with a situation which I cannot accept, viz., that of being held responsible for proceedings in which neither I nor my colleagues are allowed any voice.

In spite of this protest, three British warships were sent to Nicaragua, Corinto was seized, and the Nicaraguan Government complied with the demands of the British Government on April 28.

### III

The incident, which coincided unfortunately with negotiations which were going on with the United States in regard to Nicaragua, left the relations between Harcourt and the Foreign Office increasingly strained, and the breach was widened by another event which occurred about the same time. It sprang from the continuance of the tension in the relations of Great Britain and France. Harcourt's protests against what he regarded as the mistaken attitude of the Foreign Office in dealing with France were repeated, and extended over the whole field of the relationship of the two countries. Thus he objected to the proposed movement of troops in connection with the uneasiness at Rangoon on the subject of French "aggression." The trouble arose in regard to the question of the boundaries of Siam and Burmah, on which a "Buffer State Commission" was sitting. The French were suspected of an intention of jumping a claim on the disputed territory, and the movement of troops to Kyang-Cheng on the present borders of Burmah and Tongking was proposed as a precautionary measure to

anticipate French action. Kimberley told Harcourt (March 21) that Kyang-Cheng might have to be given up to form a part of the "buffer state," but meantime it was British territory, and it was necessary to have a small force there to prevent complications arising. Writing to Harcourt on March 22, he said :

*Kimberley to Harcourt.*

. . . The French have been informed that it is British territory in the most explicit terms. They were never at any time from the very commencement of Rosebery's negotiations with them left in ignorance of this. Nevertheless the French Commissioner, M. Pavie, who is making inquiry as to the possibility of a buffer State being established, informed our Commissioner that if he could have reached Mong Sing, the capital, before him he should have welcomed him as a "guest"; a French flag was given to the native Chief by a French agent with an intimation to him that he was under the French and attempts have been made to form a French party in the State, to second these pretensions. . . .

Harcourt objected to the movement of a force which might create difficulties with France, especially as Fowler, the Secretary for India, had told him that it was contrary to the wishes of the Indian Government for whose benefit it was supposed to be undertaken. "All this idea," he said, "of France invading India, *via* Siam, is the most foolish of all the bugbears that the panic-mongers have invented."

The incident coincided with the recrudescence of the more serious problem of the Upper Nile Valley, which continued to be productive of perplexities and irritations. The Anglo-Belgian Convention which had been so battered by Harcourt in the previous autumn still pursued a sort of doubtful existence, and Harcourt continued his protests against allowing the Belgians "to involve us in the question between them and France as to the pre-emption of the Congo." "They are playing the game they have played throughout," he wrote to Kimberley, "viz., to shove us in front as their backers in a quarrel with France. Nothing could be more mischievous or impolitic than to allow this." He had found it necessary to yield on the question of Uganda, but he persisted in his resistance to the Mombasa railway,

and when Kimberley wrote to him suggesting an inquiry by experts into the practicability and cost of the scheme, he replied :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

11, DOWNING STREET, *April 3, 1895.*— . . . When George II asked Sir Robert Walpole what it would cost to enclose Hyde Park, Sir Robert told him that it would cost three Crowns. I can inform you at once without the aid of experts what your railway will cost.

It will be three Cabinet Ministers including the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I must therefore protest against the Foreign Office consulting experts on that subject—which is of course provisionally to commit the Government—until we have time to get out of your way.

I am not at all disposed to be shoved down an inclined plane on this matter.

“ We are doing nothing which indicates a forward policy in Uganda or the Upper Nile, and nothing will be done without your previous knowledge,” replied Kimberley (*April 13*), and he insisted that inquiry would not commit the Government to any position contrary to Harcourt’s views. Harcourt was not mollified, and he wrote :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

MALWOOD, *April 15.*— . . . I am much surprised at your letter. It was thoroughly understood between you and Rosebery and myself at the Cabinet that nothing was to be done about the experts until you and I had talked the matter over, and I made an appointment with you for the express purpose of coming to an arrangement on the subject and found you were gone out of town. Whereupon you proceed just as if the whole matter was settled.

However, before you come to your railway, I hope I shall have got clear of the whole concern, and then you can do as you please.

His complaints that he was not supplied with papers and not kept informed of the intentions of the Foreign Office continued. “ The more I ask for them [the official papers], the more I don’t get them,” he wrote to Kimberley, “ and when they come they are so behindhand that I might just as well wait till they are delivered to me as a blue book.” The troubles came to a head on March 28 when Sir Edward Grey, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, made a speech in the House of Commons on the whole question of

the Nile Valley. He maintained that in consequence of the agreements of 1890 with Germany and France, the British and Egyptian Governments could claim that the whole of the Nile waterway lay within their sphere of influence. He referred to the suggestion that a French expedition was on the way to the Upper Nile Valley, and discredited it on the significant ground that France knew that such an advance would be regarded by Great Britain as "an unfriendly act." He reported that the Niger Company had informed the Government that two French expeditions had entered the British sphere in that part of Africa, and turning to the general question said that no provocation had been given by us either in Africa or Siam, and that he relied on the justice and good feeling of the French Government and of the French people to reconcile conflicting interests. Harcourt was not in the House when the speech was made. He wrote to Kimberley :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

March 29, 1895.—I have read (for I did not hear) with infinite surprise and regret E. Grey's declaration on the subject of the Nile Valley last night. These declarations appear to me (as they do to J. Morley) not consistent with the conclusions arrived at by the Cabinet in more than one discussion on the subject. The menacing tone towards France will inevitably lead to a counter-declaration on her part against our sphere of influence, and lead to the raising of the Egyptian question in its most acute form. This is the thing which I have always deprecated, and which I understood you had agreed to avoid when Dufferin was instructed not to press the point of the recognition of the "sphere of influence." You will remember that the Cabinet struck out of one of the despatches words to the effect that the English Government would regard the advance of the French on the Nile as a "very grave matter."

Rothschild came to me this morning to ask what was the meaning of this "bellicose attack on France."

Of course Grey's speech puts an end to all hopes of a general friendly settlement with Hanotaux. What makes it more astonishing to me is that I had struck out of Grey's proposed answer to a question on the Niger all the words which seemed of an unfriendly character to France, and after this was agreed to this deliberate *tirade* is delivered in a far more offensive form.

I write this note to prepare you for a discussion of this matter at the Cabinet to-morrow.

Indeed, it is for this purpose that I asked Rosebery at the request of my colleagues to summon the Cabinet.

The incident, which created widespread concern, led to an embittered controversy between Harcourt and the Foreign Office. He demanded to know whether Sir Edward Grey had been authorized to use the terms of the statement that he made, particularly the phrase of "unfriendly action" as applied to France, and Kimberley replied:

*Kimberley to Harcourt.*

35, LOWNDES SQUARE, S.W., March 31, 1895.—I thought I had stated explicitly in the Cabinet that I only gave Grey some general instructions. I did not tell him to use any particular phrase, neither "the phrase of unfriendly action," nor any other.

I see by the newspapers that Grey is supposed to have read from a written paper, but he assures me he had no written paper, only a few rough notes.

Grey would no doubt have paid attention to any suggestions from you during the discussion.

As to "an attack on the French Government being meditated and even its terms arranged at the Foreign Office," all I can say is that no such attack was meditated, and its terms therefore could not be arranged, nor do I consider that any such attack was made. . . .

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

11, DOWNING STREET, April 1, 1895.—There is one very easy and simple method of avoiding the unfortunate difficulties which have arisen.

I have therefore to request that I may see all answers on important questions of foreign policy before they are given in the House of Commons. I will also in future undertake to make, on behalf of the Cabinet, all important statements in debate on foreign affairs.

It is in this manner alone that the position of the Leader of the House of Commons can be reconciled with that of a Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the House of Lords.

To this demand Kimberley, acting as the medium of intercourse between Harcourt and Lord Rosebery, who had ceased to meet except at the Cabinet, agreed, and Harcourt drew up a memorandum recording the terms of the understanding. Lord Rosebery proposed the omission from the terms of a clause which Harcourt regarded as vital, and the latter wrote to Kimberley:

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

11, DOWNING STREET, April 5, 1895.— . . . If therefore my Memorandum is not accepted I must request that a Cabinet may be called without delay in order that I may be able to determine whether I shall continue to occupy the position now held in the face of a formal repudiation of the condition on which I accepted it.

I understand that the position you take up is that it is for you and Rosebery alone to judge whether a question of foreign affairs is of such importance as that the Cabinet or the Leader of the House of Commons should be consulted upon it, and that, if you conclude that question in the negative, an announcement is to be made to the House of Commons without the knowledge or assent either of the Cabinet or of the Leader of the House, and that the Anglo-Belgian Treaty and the question of the Nile Valley are proper examples of the kind of questions which are to be so treated.

It virtually amounts to this, that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords are to determine, if they think fit, any questions of foreign policy, and irrevocably commit the Government without allowing any voice in the matter to their colleagues in the House of Commons, and that the Leader of that House is to accept and defend that policy without previous assent or consultation with him. That is a position which I cannot under any circumstances accept, and it cannot be too soon ascertained whether it is one in which the Cabinet are prepared to concur.

An accommodation was patched up, but the temper of the relations was now little short of that of open war, and it was not softened by the apparent discovery that the rumoured French expedition to the Nile was baseless. Writing a second letter to Kimberley (April 5), Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

. . . The whole affair is one of those bugbears constantly cooked up in the Foreign Office, like the scare got up as to the Belgian occupation of Wadelai, which led to the Anglo-Belgian Convention and was founded upon a panic which was a pure invention. Why we should shake our fist in the face of France upon the hypothesis that she is about to march upon the Nile (for which there is no more foundation than that she is about to march upon the Volga) I cannot conceive.

I am glad to see that Hanotaux has treated the question (as he always does) with a dignity and moderation which we might do well to imitate, and has replied with a quiet rebuke to our "unfriendly" demonstration.

His argument was for peace and detachment from quarrels in all connections, and when on the conclusion of the Chino-



'Japanese War the Foreign Office expressed objection to "the cession of the Liaotung Peninsula" to Japan, he wrote to Kimberley, "Is there no pie in the world out of which we can manage to keep our fingers?" If Russia chose to act that was her affair. "But I am quite as much against entering upon active operations in concert with Russia in this matter as I am against going into partnership with the Triple Alliance. The true strength of our position is one of absolute neutrality."

It is impossible to touch on all the foreign and colonial issues that during this disturbed time occupied Harcourt's mind and agitated his pen; but one subject must be glanced at because it was the first rumble of a great storm that was soon to break over the country and complete, among other things, the rupture of the Liberal Party. Sir H. Loch had ceased to be High Commissioner in South Africa, and Sir Hercules Robinson was appointed to succeed him. Harcourt entered an energetic protest, and claimed to have a voice in the appointment. Ripon, the Colonial Minister, admitted the grounds of Harcourt's objection, but said that he had made it a *sine qua non* of the appointment that Robinson should cease his connection with De Beers and the Standard Bank. On other grounds he was the best man for a very troubled situation. Harcourt only found his objections strengthened by the defence.

*Harcourt to Ripon.*

11, DOWNING STREET, S.W., *March 5, 1895.*--- . . . It is quite true that Sir H. R. has special and particular knowledge of and relations to South African affairs, but it is the very nature of that experience which constitutes his special disqualification.

The fact of his surrender or transfer of his pecuniary interests does not in the least alter the state of the case.

If the Chairman of the L. & N.W. Railway gave up his seat at the Board and sold his shares, no one would think he was on that account fitted to be made the next day the Chairman of a Committee to sit upon the Company's Bills.

The relations of the Cape Colony and the English Government towards the Transvaal and Kruger are of a most critical character. No one can doubt for a moment what will be the policy of Sir H. R. on these questions.

He will naturally be regarded not as an impartial administrator, but as the nominee of Rhodes to carry out his political ideas and his financial interests. I can conceive nothing worse, and the effect on commercial opinion in this country is very bad.

The selection of a man of seventy-one for such a situation strikes at the root of the whole system which we are endeavouring in the face of much odium to establish in the Civil Service.

The reason why I insisted so strongly on the Leader of the House of Commons being consulted on all important appointments—and this is a specially important and exceptional appointment—is because I know by experience that the fortunes of a Government in the House of Commons depend on its appointments perhaps more than anything else. When the Prime Minister is in the House of Commons of course his sanction is obtained beforehand, but the situation of a Leader of the House of Commons who finds himself called upon to defend appointments of which he knows nothing and does not approve is one which is impossible.

However, the appointment had been made, and could not be revoked, and, as so frequently happened, Harcourt was left to rage against a *fait accompli*.

There will be two points of view on this story of incessant conflict; but they are not necessarily irreconcilable. It is clear, on the one hand, that Harcourt was a difficult colleague; but it is not less clear, on the other, that he was engaged in defending in singularly trying circumstances what he believed to be the fundamental doctrines of constitutional government, and that his suspicion that a new and perilous disavowal of the Liberal tradition in foreign policy was taking effect was not without foundation. For forty years he had been one of the closest observers of world movements, and he was sensible that formidable developments were taking shape on the European stage. New personal forces were in the field, new and far-reaching motives were in operation and the re-grouping of the great Powers was assuming a definition and gravity that shed a sinister light over the future. Acutely sensitive to the changes in the barometer of world politics, he was confirmed in his lifelong view of the true function of this country in external affairs. He did not wish England to be caught in the web of continental obligations, but to preserve freedom of action and an attitude of enlightened and vigilant

detachment. The pursuit of this policy, the aim of which was to keep the goodwill and confidence of the continental Powers, involved a certain disinterestedness in regard to extra-European affairs and a liberality of conduct which would disarm suspicion. Whether the danger that he foresaw and which in the end brought about the destruction of the European system could have been averted is only a matter for speculation ; but in the light of events it cannot be denied that Harcourt's struggle for the maintenance of the old Liberal doctrine was fraught with momentous issues.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A TOTTERING GOVERNMENT

Navy Estimates—Speech at Derby.—Robert Harcourt's illness—  
Letters to the Queen—Debate on the Address—Cotton duties  
debate—Bimetallism again—Choice of a Speaker—Local  
Option Bill.—A successful Budget—The Cromwell Statue—  
Trustee of the British Museum—The Cordite Vote.

FROM what has gone before it will be apparent that the vessel of the Government did not enter upon the Session of 1895 in a very seaworthy condition. The captain had failed to fulfil the high expectations entertained of his attractive, but indeterminate character ; the chief lieutenant was hardly on speaking terms with him ; the crew were torn with dissensions ; there was profound disagreement as to the line of policy that should be put before the country, and though the Budget had been a dazzling success it did not serve to cover the general sense of failure and disintegration. It was obvious that whenever the election came the Liberal ship would founder, and the imminence of disaster threw its shadow over the spirit of the Government and the Party. Harcourt himself had no illusions on the point, and hardly concealed his satisfaction that the end of an intolerable situation was near. "After all," he wrote to Spencer, "it does not much signify, for there is no prospect of our surviving to lay the Navy estimates on the table." He had in the previous autumn begun his customary campaign against the Admiralty. There is no need to go into it in detail, for it repeated, though in a much more moderate spirit, the controversies of previous years. There were the usual demands for increased expenditure for ships and guns, the usual protests from the Treasury,

the usual fervid discussions about the comparative navies, the relative rate of building, and so on. Harcourt was more genial, however, for he had not this time a huge deficit to face. His Budget promised to produce a surplus adequate to meet the new demands of the departments, and in these circumstances he fought his battle with less than his usual passion. Moreover he had so many quarrels going on with the Foreign Office at the time that even his appetite for disputation was sated. If he had a protest to make to Spencer he invested it with the raillery of a man who could look on with amused interest at an affair in which he was no longer deeply concerned. Thus, complaining of the absence of the heads of departments from London and contrasting the fact with the practice in former Governments, he said :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

*December 10, 1894.*— . . . Now it seems quite enough for each to say it is not convenient for him to come to town as he has married a wife or bought a yoke of oxen or wants to go on the stump—all excellent things in their way, but which ought not to stand in the light of more important business. In the late Government as you know they had a standing committee of the Cabinet sitting *en permanence* on naval affairs. . . .

I regard what is going on (the speeches in the country) partly with astonishment, partly with amusement, wholly with resignation.

The theologians used to occupy themselves with what they called the harmony of the gospels, but I doubt if even the "doctor dubitantium" of Hawarden would succeed in reconciling the deliverances of the several ministerial evangelists from their different pulpits.

The ungodly say that the Government don't declare what they mean, because they don't know what they mean, but after all are the ungodly so very wrong? For my part I would give a good deal to know what the Government do mean. . . .

"We began this Government with a profusion of *weekly* Cabinets: it has ended in *quarterly* meetings," he wrote to his son in his characteristic vein of extravagance. But his own days, apart from his incessant controversies, were filled to the brim with the business of the coming Session. "I have had a long and tiring day," he wrote to Loulou (January 4), "with S. Howard on New Forest; then the

Customs on their estimates ; then Spencer *cum* Campbell-Bannerman on Navy ; then E. Hamilton on Estimates ; then Jenkyns on Local Veto ; then Mowatt on things in general ; then Austen Leigh on Suez Canal—so what a day I have been having ! It is now nine o'clock, and I have not rested a moment except for luncheon, when I had Spencer, C. Bannerman, Murray and E. Hamilton. I will write you more to-morrow, but the result of the whole I regard as satisfactory." He had induced Spencer to cut down the increase in his demands by a quarter of a million to £1,400,000, and Campbell-Bannerman had earned his esteem by asking for no supplementary estimates for the army, and no increase in the estimates. He still believed the naval demands excessive, and good-humouredly chaffed Spencer over a naval panic which had sprung up in France :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

11, DOWNING STREET, January 20.—I am delighted with the French Naval Commission Report you have sent me. But you and your admirals will be very jealous of it as I think it equals, if it does not transcend, even your Board in the absurdities of panic-mongering.

The French have no navy, and the British are omnipotent. But it also sets forth the preparations of England for an irresistible invasion of France by a land force of which all the details are given, and the proof of it is the number of pigeons taken from Southampton to be flown from Cherbourg !!!

Really Richards must look to his laurels. The French are likely to beat him into fits on his own battlefield of panic.

There had been much discussion during the winter as to the precedence to be given to measures in the programme of the Session. Lord Rosebery had raised the House of Lords question in a speech at Bradford declaring himself to be a Second Chamber man, but in favour of restricting the powers of the Second Chamber. In the Cabinet there was a good deal of conflict as to the best method of dealing with the question, and the Journal records that Harcourt himself favoured a single-Chamber policy. But both he and Mr. Morley were convinced that, as a question of strategy, it

was not an opportune moment to commit the fortunes of the Party to a challenge to the House of Lords, and Harcourt drew up a memorandum dealing with the difficulties of the problem. He himself was determined to raise the banner of local option, and Mr. Morley's main interest at the time was the assertion of the claims of Home Rule as the main commitment of the Party, while the clamour of the Welsh contingent made the introduction of a Disestablishment Bill for Wales essential. In these circumstances the House of Lords issue subsided into the background, and it became apparent from a speech of Lord Rosebery to the National Liberal Federation at Cardiff in January that he had abandoned the idea of an early dissolution on the House of Lords, that he was converted to the policy of "filling up the cup," and that he was contemplating Home Rule all round instead of an Irish measure. He very handsomely acknowledged that the honours of the last Session belonged to Harcourt. The latter subsequently (January 23) made a reappearance on the platform at Derby. His journey thither was made the occasion of a significant display of public enthusiasm which recalled the days of Gladstone's triumphant railway journeys. There were great demonstrations at Bedford and Leicester where he was presented with addresses, and his arrival in Derby was awaited by a vast procession which, with 500 torch-bearers, accompanied him through the densely crowded streets of the town. The whole incident was much commented on, and was widely interpreted as the comment of the rank and file of the Liberals in the country, not merely on the Budget, but on the episode of the leadership. As usual with him in his public speeches, Harcourt gave no hint of ministerial disagreements, but devoted himself to a defence of the Government's legislation, a strong plea for local option as the wisest expression of temperance policy, a reassertion of Home Rule as a chief commitment of Liberal policy, and an attack on the pretensions of the House of Lords. Referring to the Budget, he made a reply to Mr. Balfour which deserves quotation :

. . . Mr. Balfour, of whom I will say that he is not generally an unfair man (hear, hear), has recently personally made against me a charge of which, I think, I have reason to complain. It is a charge which is unjust and which is untrue. I will give it in his own words. He said, "The Chancellor of the Exchequer's most earnest desire is, at all events, not to see the English with an all-powerful fleet, and not to see the English strong in all parts of the world," etc. That statement is untrue. (Cheers.) I have proved it to be so by deeds a good deal more convincing than the empty words of Mr. Balfour. I can contrast my contribution to the British Navy and the strength of England with that of Mr. Balfour. I found the money which was required in a manner which the Parliament of the country has sanctioned—has approved. (Hear, hear.) I have done something better than the noisy braggarts (cheers and laughter) who, while clamouring for immense expenditure, have factiously opposed every possible means of defraying it. (Hear, hear.) What I had to do was to distribute the burden so that it might be most fairly borne by those most capable to bear it. (Loud cheers.) Nor did I feel at liberty to imitate the example of my predecessors, who, with abundant surpluses, spent the money merrily and left their successors to liquidate their unpaid bills (laughter) and the immense arrears of work for which they had made no provision; and yet there was no one of those taxes, on the beer, on the spirits, on the death duties, that they did not, with factious opposition, endeavour to defeat. They invited the aid, and got it, of the extreme Irish Party. These are the patriotic supporters of the Ministry. (Laughter.) These are the devoted friends of the British Navy. For very shame I should advise Mr. Balfour and his ducal allies to hold their tongues on this subject, and to give the nation an opportunity of forgetting the way in which, in hopes of damaging a Government, they laboured to deprive the Navy of the resources which we sought to give it. (Hear, hear.) I do not remember a chapter in the history of the nation that I think more discreditable than that in which Mr. Balfour and his friends took so prominent a part. (Cheers.) There are a great many people in this country who think they know a great deal about finance; but there are some people who are unwilling to accept the self-evident principle that increased expenditure means increased taxation. If the expenditure had to be met, I should like to ask these gentlemen how they considered it could better have been met than we met it. That is what the Unionists have not ventured to say. They attack every tax. Why, every tax is attackable, and every tax is detestable. I know that, but if the burden has to be borne somebody has to bear it. And all that they have to contribute to the powerful fleet and the might of England that Mr. Balfour says I detest is the querulous protest that, at all events, whatever else happens, their highnesses and mightinesses are to contribute nothing to that burden.



The visit to Derby coincided with many personal distresses. Writing to Lord Rosebery a week before, Harcourt said, "I wish to express to you my deep sympathies in the domestic calamity which has fallen upon you and your sister (whose lovable character I have always admired).<sup>1</sup> I know that in turn you will be sorry to hear that yesterday the blow has fallen on us of being told that our dear Bobby is attacked with the same fell disease (typhoid fever) which is a terrible anxiety. These are the things which make life seem an intolerable burden." "Your blessed telegram was a great joy," he wrote to his wife from Derby, where he had received good news of "Bobby's" condition. "We received it just on our return here from the procession. . . . The procession was a splendid success. The torch-bearers I should think 500 yards long or more, and the whole of Derby in the streets. Tommy [Roe] says the feeling about Bobby has had a great deal to do with it." The loss of his wife's uncle, Thomas Motley, the death of Randolph Churchill, and the illness and death of his old friend, Henry Ponsonby, the Queen's private secretary, all combined to make the time a painful one. Referring in a letter to the Queen to the death of Churchill, Harcourt said (January 24), "The death of Randolph Churchill comes at last as a relief from a protracted agony. His was a singular and erratic career, marked by misguided genius which only needed judgment to have made it brilliant and successful. One cannot but deplore the untimely extinction of so much unfulfilled promise." Harcourt himself was attacked by influenza, and had to communicate with the Queen at the opening of Parliament through his son. Fortunately his anxieties about Robert were, after much alarm, relieved, and he was able to tell his wife that he had received "a most delightful letter from Bob," now convalescing at Brighton, which he acknowledged in a letter in which he said :

*Harcourt to his son Robert.*<sup>1</sup>

TREASURY CHAMBERS, *March 2, 1895*.— . . . I went to see A. Balfour yesterday and found him in much worse case than you have

<sup>1</sup> The death of the son of Lord and Lady Leconfield.

ever been. Very limp and weak. He is going to Brighton to-day, so you may go and pay your respects to your "leader." He may lead *you*, but he does not lead the House of Commons. I asked him why he was so clumsy and did not turn us out at once. He replied meekly, "Because we can't." So you see the starch is all out of him.

We are going on very nicely, thank you, and are "very nice young men for a small majority."

I find myself often very tired at night in the House of Commons, so I beg you will assure "Nurse Walker" that I shall require her attendance in my room at the House of Commons in order to administer to me Bengers, port wine, Château Yquem, etc., every hour, and to work a "draw sheet" on the front bench.

## II

Meanwhile the Session had opened, and it became evident that the life of the Government hung by a thread. The small majority was in daily peril of being converted into a minority by accident or by any slight defection from within the ranks of the Party. The Parnellites, under John Redmond, were frankly hostile, and the Opposition did not hesitate to associate itself with them to bring the Government down. Harcourt's letters to the Queen indicate the menace under which the Ministry lived. Thus, writing on February 13, he said :

### *Harcourt to Queen Victoria.*

. . . On Monday Mr. J. Redmond, the leader of the Parnellites, brought forward a motion demanding a dissolution on the subject of Home Rule. This was supported by the leaders and the great body of the Unionist Opposition. The following the lead of Mr. Redmond was very distasteful to many of the Tories, who were with difficulty induced to vote for the amendment, and a few such as Sir Stafford Northcote declined to take part in it. The result was that the motion was defeated by a majority of 20, which was 8 more than the Government majority in the former division. Now that the 9 Parnellite members are in permanent alliance with the Tory Opposition, as the Nationalists were in 1885 the Government cannot count at most on a majority of more than 15. Sir William was too unwell to be present and was paired on this division.

On Monday Mr. Naoroji brought on the budget of Indian grievances, and Mr. Fowler made an admirable speech in defence of the English rule in India. Mr. Fowler is certainly the boldest and most successful Indian Minister of whom Sir William has any recollection.

The firm tone he has adopted has had the best possible effect—and it is a great and too rare advantage to have the principal Secretary of State in the House of Commons. Sir William regrets to say that he was again obliged on Tuesday to absent himself from the debate, only being able to attend to answer questions. . . .

But in spite of hostile combinations and critical passages, the debate on the Address ended brilliantly for the Government, and the incident is described by Harcourt in his nightly letter to the Queen. Chamberlain had introduced an amendment condemning the waste of parliamentary time in "filling up the cup," and Mr. Asquith, who followed him in a remarkable speech, quoted with great effect a denunciation by Chamberlain of the House of Lords whose cup was "nearly full." Harcourt, who had the master's delight in brilliant craftsmanship, wrote to the Queen (February 16) :

*Harcourt to Queen Victoria.*

. . . On that day he [Chamberlain] made the Motion in a speech somewhat less effective than his usual efforts on great occasions. Mr. Asquith greatly distinguished himself in his reply, and has established his position as one of the very first debaters and speakers in the House of Commons. Sir William can hardly recall a more signal parliamentary success. It was felt that he had greatly the advantage over Mr. Chamberlain, and the debate languished to such a degree that it was hardly possible to keep a House during the evening. It will be difficult to revive any interest in it on Monday, when the discussion will be closed and the Address voted.

"You should not do your work so completely and leave nothing for anyone else to do," he wrote delightedly to Mr. Asquith, and to his son he said :

11, DOWNING STREET, February 16.—. . . Asquith's speech last night was a splendid success. He knocked Joe into a cocked hat. Even the Tories admit that the latter was nowhere.

I found Margot in J. Morley's room, and told her I had half a mind to kiss her, and A. offered to retire for the purpose.

I don't think I ever heard a speech which created so great an effect in the House. So far we have out-debated as well as out-voted them. It was quite a case of David and Goliath. Austen looked much dejected.

All going on well here.

Harcourt loved to praise his "nice young men" in his letters to the Queen, but he could not praise himself or he

might have written with enthusiasm of his speech in closing the debate on the Address, which was one of his most effective parliamentary efforts. His own part in the debate on the Address had been considerable, and covered many topics. Of Churchill he said, "There was something original in his character; there was an independence in his ideas; there was a brightness and force in his language which attracted to him those by whom he was most strongly opposed." Speaking on Goschen's amendment, he attacked (February 8) the doctrine of high prices, which was the avowed object of Mr. Chaplin, and said:

. . . In my opinion the cheapness of commodities has been an infinite blessing to the great mass of the people of this country. It has been an immense addition to their wages, and the attempt to raise upon the people of this country the price of their bread, the price of their clothes, and the price of all the comforts of life by tampering with the currency, is, in my opinion, one of the deepest errors into which a politician can possibly fall.

In the gay speech (February 18) in which, on the Chamberlain amendment, he reviewed the tactics of the Opposition in starting the Government off on the journey of the Session with three votes of confidence, he said the first amendment, which he described as the "Hampshire-cum-West Ham Amendment," condemned the Government because they did not occupy the time of Parliament with agricultural and industrial distress; the second, which he would call the "Unionist-cum-Parnellite Amendment" (Mr. Redmond's on Home Rule) told them they were to concentrate on Home Rule until the dissolution; the third (Mr. Chamberlain's) appeared to mean that the Government were to think of nothing else but the position of the House of Lords:

. . . I do not know (he said) whether some controversy was going on as to by whom it (the Chamberlain amendment) was to be brought forward, but in the end the third vote of want of confidence is produced by one of the chief champions of disestablishment. Why cannot you fight under your own colours? What has become of the old true blue flag? There seems to be no true blue left, but there is a kind of mixture; I do not know what. There is perhaps the faded yellow of Birmingham, a little touch of green from

'Waterford, and a little spot of red from West Ham, and that is what the blue flag has come to. . . .

The rt. hon. gentlemen was good enough to tell us that we have forgotten how to govern and not learnt how to resign. . . . What is the charge you have brought against our administrative capacity? Is it against the conduct of foreign affairs? The rt. hon. gentleman said the other night he considered that out of the arena of party questions. Is it the government of Ireland he charges us with? When has Ireland been more peaceful or in a condition of which England had less reason to be ashamed than at the present moment? As to domestic policy, are you prepared to affirm that the Home Office has been less well conducted under my rt. hon. friend than it was in former times? As to local government in this country, you yourselves claim to have a share in the measure (Parish Councils Act) that was brought forward with such ability by my rt. hon. friend, the Secretary of State for India. As to education, I know you do not approve of everything we have done. Yes; but you cannot say we have forgotten how to govern. As to finance, I must not speak, but if you choose to challenge us upon that issue either here or in the country, we are ready to meet you. Well, so much for the statement that we have forgotten how to govern. Then you say we have not learnt how to resign. No, Sir, because the House of Commons has not taught us.

The House very nearly supplied the lesson that evening, for the Address was only carried by a majority of eight. It will be seen that, in spite of the disturbances behind the scenes, Harcourt kept up a brave front in the open, and left it to be assumed that the Cabinet was the abode of an idyllic peace, undisturbed even by foreign alarms. I find among his papers at this time a note of a "conversation with Lord Rosebery" (February 20, 6 p.m.):

*Sir William Harcourt*: All I can say is that if there is anything that I can do to make your position easier or more satisfactory to yourself, I am willing and anxious to do it, for your sake, for my sake, and for the sake of the Party. I don't see how it is possible for me to say more than that.

*Lord Rosebery*: No, I do not see how you could say more.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Journal records in great detail the crisis of February 19, 20, 21. On the 19th, at a hastily summoned Cabinet, "Rosebery said he had called them together on an unpleasant matter, and proceeded to read a memo of four quarto pages containing his formal resignation on the ground that he was not sufficiently supported or defended by his colleagues." "W. V. H. spoke first, and protested that it was

With the waters of the Address successfully navigated, the Government set themselves to what Mr. Balfour had called "ploughing the sands of the seashore." They began with a remarkable victory, routing the attack of James on the subject of the imposition of import duties on cotton manufactures and yarns into India. The debate was made memorable by the famous speech of Fowler, by the unwonted exchange of compliments between Harcourt and Goschen, and by the unaccustomed Government luxury of a big majority—304 to 109. Writing to Lord Rosebery next day, Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

11, DOWNING STREET, February 22.— . . . Since the days of Sennacherib there has been nothing seen to equal the collapse of the Opposition last night. Goschen informed me before dinner of his intention to support us, and that G. Hamilton "would speak for the Party." Nothing could be more foolish than the speech of the latter pledging Salisbury *personally* against the Cotton Duties.

The whole thing was evidently ridden to the order of Salisbury and Balfour. The result is most advantageous to the Government, and equally destructive to the Opposition. Their own friends curse their tactics—*vide The Times* article this morning.

Fowler's speech was beyond all praise, strong, clear and rhetorically most successful. It will greatly aggrandize his hold on the House and the country. . . .

impossible for Rosebery to do anything of the kind. . . . He pointed out what a wretched position R. would be in if he took such a course, that his colleagues would strenuously deny the imputation of disloyalty, which would recoil only on himself ; that it would mean the break-up of the Government, as he (W. V. H.) would certainly decline to carry on the Government, and that if R. thought that he had not been sufficiently defended by his colleagues in the House of Commons they would endeavour to say something which would be more satisfactory to him." For two days the situation remained acute, and the Journal records long discussions as to what course Harcourt should follow in the event of Lord Rosebery's persisting in resignation. There was a long interview between Lord Rosebery and Harcourt, in which the former dealt with his grievances against his colleagues. "W. V. H. allowed him to run on for some time, and described it as being like playing a big salmon : you had to let him have plenty of line when he made his rushes and then reel up slowly afterwards." The next day (Feb. 21) there was a further meeting of the Cabinet, when Lord Rosebery said that, having received satisfactory assurances from all his colleagues, he did not propose to carry out his previous intention.

Harcourt recommended "the whole of this (Fowler's) speech" to the Queen's attention. "Never has the Indian Government and the principle of the relation of the English to the Indian Administration been so well defended. The occasion displayed the immense advantage of the Secretary of State being in the House of Commons where he can speak with commanding authority. The effect of Mr. Fowler's statement was immediate and universal. The moral weight absolutely paralysed and discomfited the Opposition, which began to dissolve." Forgetful of the caution from the Queen in other days about giving the other side, Harcourt let himself go unrestrainedly on this victory in his letter to the Queen. "It will be some time," he concluded, "before an Opposition again uses the Government of India as a party weapon to overthrow a Government." "Your speech," he wrote to Fowler, "will live as a model of parliamentary force and judgment. . . . You are in your own person an example of the incomparable advantage of the head of a great department commanding the situation in the House of Commons. Where should we have been if the case had been left in the hands of an Under-Secretary? . . . I have always received such kind and constant support from you that I could not resist writing this note."

A few days later Harcourt was rejoicing in another victory—this time over his old foes of the bimetallist persuasion. The German Parliament had pressed on their Government to summon a conference on the subject, and the occasion was seized by the bimetallists to propose a resolution calling on the Government to take part in the conference. Harcourt did not oppose the resolution, but made a very distinct declaration that under no circumstances would the English Government consent to any change in the basis of their established currency. "The object of the bimetallists," he told the Queen (February 27) in reporting the debate, "is to change the single gold standard of currency in this country for a double standard of gold and silver. The gold standard was established in 1816, and has been firmly maintained by all English statesmen ever since. But a school

has arisen which believes that it is possible to raise silver to its former price, which was double the value it now bears, by an international agreement. This party think that by this means they could create a superfluity of money and thus raise prices, especially of corn, for the benefit of the agricultural interest." All the great financiers, such as Peel and Gladstone, were profoundly opposed to the change, and Harcourt shared their view. Writing to Farrer, he said :

*Harcourt to Lord Farrer.*

II, DOWNING STREET, *March 1*.—You Lords who live at home at ease know very little of the danger of the House of Commons seas which we have to navigate. . . .

If a division had been impending I could not have ventured to make so outspoken and peremptory a declaration as I did of the determination of the Government to have nothing to do with the accursed thing.

As it was my denunciation of any attempt to depart from the single gold standard stood uncontradicted by any responsible member of the Opposition, for I do not include Chaplin in this category. The effect of my categorical declaration has been exactly what I intended at Berlin and Paris as you may see from the newspaper telegrams. . . .

I have no doubt that the bimetallists here in consequence of my speech have urged their friends abroad not to press for a conference during my reign, but to wait for my successor "Hotspur," who, however, when the time comes will not "toe the line," so for the present you will not have to go to Berlin.

You may depend upon it the German Emperor will have no taste for repeating the fiasco of Brussels. . . .

Harcourt's speech on this occasion was as final in its effect as Fowler's on the Indian cotton duties had been, and effectively checked an invitation from Berlin to a conference. "Sir William's speech," said the *Vossische Zeitung* of Berlin, "was a masterpiece," and German opinion agreed that he had dispelled the mist which enveloped the currency question.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Later in the year, following on a memorial to the Treasury from the Bimetallic League, there was a further correspondence between Harcourt and his old antagonist Hucks-Gibbs. (See Appendix III.)



## III

While these and many other controversies were proceeding in the House, a domestic storm was brewing on the subject of the Speakership. Speaker Peel had been elected as a Liberal in 1884, and had, according to custom, been re-elected without opposition in succeeding years. The condition of his health now made his retirement necessary, and the question of replacing him was made more difficult by the uncertain position of the Government. If, as seemed clear, the Government was near the end of its term, it was felt to be unwise to elect another Liberal Speaker who might not be acceptable to the new House of Commons. There was one Liberal who would probably have been acceptable to all parties. This was Campbell-Bannerman. But the Government was not strong enough in the House of Commons to suffer the loss from its front bench of one of its most popular and able members. Harcourt himself felt that the heavy burden of leadership would be intolerable if Campbell-Bannerman was withdrawn, and "C.B.," although he would have liked the position and told Harcourt that he "rather fancied himself for it," did not press his claim.

Harcourt, who held strongly the view that the Speakership should be divested of party colour, was anxious for the adoption of Courtney, a Liberal Unionist, who had been Chairman of Committee, and whose qualities of mind, character, experience and temper marked him out conspicuously for the post above all competitors other than Campbell-Bannerman. He pressed this view upon the Prime Minister, who appears to have made overtures in this sense which were declined by Courtney on the ground that he would not have the support of his Unionist colleagues, especially of Chamberlain. Harcourt, however, continued to press Courtney's claims, but in the meantime a Radical movement headed by Labouchere was on foot to secure the adoption of a Liberal candidate,<sup>1</sup> and feeling reverted

<sup>1</sup> Among the names discussed were those of Mr. Asquith and Sir E. Grey. Referring to the former, Labouchere in a letter to Mr.

to Campbell-Bannerman, who was more or less acceptable to the Opposition, and who was still inclined to the post. "My ambitions," he wrote to Harcourt (March 9), "do not permanently lie, nor do my powers, in a fighting direction; and despite my robustious aspect I do not think I can long go on with *active* politics. So my doctor told me the other day. What more fitting therefore than the calmer life?" But Harcourt, while admitting his fitness, said he could not be spared, and Campbell-Bannerman yielded, though he thought it no proper attitude for the Party to go to the enemy and say, "Please Mr. Balfour and Mr. Chamberlain be so kind as to lend us a man; we are so poor in men and so poor in votes that we cannot furnish or dare not spare a candidate." Throughout this business Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were in constant communication and in entire agreement on the subject of Campbell-Bannerman, and in the view that Courtney should have the position. But Courtney finally declined. He "came here with his answer 'No' this morning," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley (March 15). "He was evidently very much chagrined at the treatment he had had from his friends. He said he was told the Tories as a body would oppose him now and hereafter." Lord Rosebery thereupon favoured the selection of a Party candidate, but Harcourt, fearing that this meant Campbell-Bannerman and determined not to lose him from the Treasury bench, still opposed a Party choice to which he was in any case opposed on principle. Writing on the subject to the Queen (March 19), Harcourt said:

*Harcourt to Queen Victoria.*

... A great desire had been expressed on both sides of the House that Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, who is universally popular, should be nominated, but the Cabinet felt that there were great objections in principle to taking a principal member of their own body and placing him in the Chair—thus making the Speakership a purely Party appointment, a practice which has had such an evil result in the United States; and in the second place they regarded the recon-

Lewis Harcourt said, "Margot would occasionally steal his wig and replace him in the Chair, which would be a refreshing change."

struction of the Government which would have been the necessary consequence of the removal of Mr. Campbell-Bannerman as so serious a blow that it would probably be fatal to the Administration. The candidatures of both Mr. Courtney and Mr. Campbell-Bannerman are therefore now out of the field. It has been thought best to reserve for a few days the decision as to the future nomination. . . .

The Opposition then put forward Sir Matthew White-Ridley as their candidate, and the Liberals, now resolved to have a candidate of their own, concentrated on William Court Gully, Q.C., "who knows nothing and whom nobody knows," wrote Harcourt to Lord Rosebery. "If there is to be a Party fight over this, let us make it as *little party* as may be," Harcourt wrote to Mr. Balfour, who, thanking him for his "friendly note," said (April 5), "I have no doubt that our people will run Mr. Ridley, but I do not anticipate any unpleasantness. I must get somebody to point out Gully to me in the House! I am told he is better looking than our man."

Harcourt's concern about the impartiality of the Chair led him to write to Mr. Balfour urging that, in spite of bad precedents, "when the fight is over, both sides ought to shake hands over the Speaker. If we should be beaten, I shall certainly congratulate your man. I only mention this in order that you may consider the matter without in any way desiring to bind you." Unfortunately the election did not pass off in the spirit that Harcourt desired. Mr. Balfour intervened with a charge against the Government of partisanship in the matter, and brought down upon himself a crushing rejoinder from Harcourt. In swinging sentence after swinging sentence, says a contemporary record of the debate,<sup>1</sup> he rubbed in the true charge and marked the true culprit. "It was my first, as it had been my last, object to secure in that Chair the man who of all others, who—" But the roar of cheers which burst from the Liberal ranks, and the pent-up cheers of a bitter resentment, drowned the close of his sentence. "Had it not been for the compact," he went on, "which has worked

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, April 11.

in such a singular way both inside and outside the House—had it not been for the veto of the right hon. gentleman"—and he turned towards Mr. Chamberlain—"there would have been no contest." During all this time, Mr. Chamberlain had become paler and paler, and Mr. Courtney—yellow-waistcoated as ever—had beamed a larger and larger smile. And now the two presented a striking contrast of colour and mood—Mr. Chamberlain the very picture of acid distemper, and Mr. Courtney radiant with an honourable pride at the tribute of the House. In the end Gully was elected by 285 votes to 274, and writing to Sir A. Bigge, the Queen's private secretary, Harcourt said (April 10) :

... We beat your Northumbrian to-day, though Jack Wharton claimed the place as the monopoly of the county. I am almost sorry for it for Mat. is a first-rate fellow. But the Unionists (I believe you are one of that pestilent lot) would not let us have Courtney who was really the fittest men—so a Party fight, which I laboured to avert, became inevitable. I believe Gully is really a good man.

#### IV

While the controversy was in progress, the programme of the Session was being pressed forward, and the early successes of the Government were continued. The question of Cyprus was raised on the supplementary estimates, and Dilke made a strong demand for withdrawal. Harcourt had always regarded the acquisition of Cyprus as the acquisition of a white elephant. It had, he admitted, cost the British taxpayer £500,000, and had yielded no tangible results. But since we had undertaken the responsibility of this "squalid possession" the charges must be met, and he protested against raising the whole Eastern question on a vote for Cyprus. We could not retire from our obligations and he would be sorry to hand over the Cypriots or any other population to Turkey. The introduction of the Welsh Church Bill was carried by an unexpected majority of 44, due to the attitude of Chamberlain and the Liberal Unionists, and writing to the Queen on the subject, Harcourt (April 2) said :

*Harcourt to Queen Victoria.*

. . . The debate was on the whole a dull one, the most striking speech being that of Mr. Birrell, who married the widow of Mr. Lionel Tennyson (who was one of the Bruce family). Mr. Birrell, who is well known as a brilliant man of letters, speaks in a very original style, and though his opinions are somewhat eccentric, he expresses them in a manner which is attractive. . . .

An Irish Land Bill was introduced by Mr. Morley, followed by the Local Option Bill on April 8. Harcourt is said to have insisted on this measure against the desire of the Party managers. Ever since his days at the Home Office he had held the view that local control of the traffic was the true solution of the licensing question, and the conflict of opinion in the previous autumn had only strengthened his determination to proceed with the policy. The Bill followed very closely the model of the Bill of 1893. But the Bill of 1893 had, as he explained, been correctly called a Local Veto Bill, whereas the new measure was really a Local Option Bill, as it offered other options beside those of total prohibition. The areas, as in the earlier Bill, were in boroughs the wards, and in rural districts the parishes or the wards of parishes. A prohibitory resolution if carried by a majority of two-thirds of the electors voting would come into force at the general annual licensing meeting next occurring after the expiration of three years after the passing of the Act. While this resolution was in force, no licenses of any kind could be granted within the area. After a resolution had been taken the question could not be reopened one way or another for three years. If a prohibitory resolution was in force at the end of the three years it could be maintained by a simple majority. (The Bill of 1893 had required a three-fourths majority.) The new proposal in the Bill was that a requisition might be presented, not for prohibition, but for a reduction in the number of licenses. A resolution of this kind only required a simple majority to enable it to be put into force. Rules were laid down for the action of the licensing justices under these conditions. A resolution for Sunday closing only

required a bare majority, and could be put into force at once. As before, eating-houses, hotels and other places of refreshment were excluded from the Bill.

The attitude of the Opposition to the Bill was determined beforehand. They had not forgotten that it was Harcourt's opposition which had destroyed the licensing clauses of the Local Government Bill of the last Government because they had contemplated compensation to the licensees who were deprived of their licenses. It was read a first time without a division, however, as it had not been printed.

After the triumphant Budget of the previous year, Harcourt had little to do on the financial side in 1895 but to record the success of his expedients. The new Death Duties had realized the £1,000,000 they were calculated to produce, and in spite of an increase of estimated expenditure amounting to £2,000,000, most of which was due to the increased demands of the Navy, there was only a trifling anticipated deficit which Harcourt met by continuing the additional 6*½*l. a barrel on beer imposed in the previous year. He introduced his new Budget on May 2 with general approval, and with an entire absence of the excitement that had accompanied the Budget of the previous year. Harcourt had won his laurels as a financier.

So far the Session had been surprisingly successful. The small majority had held together with unexpected solidarity, and Harcourt's management of the House had admittedly been at once intrepid and skilful. He went to Malwood for Easter in high humour. Writing to thank T. E. Ellis, the Chief Whip, he said :

. . . No Captain had so good a first-lieutenant and officer of the watch. But for you I could never have got the vessel through such cramped waters. As it is we have finished up with a blaze of triumph, and our insolent foes go chopfallen to eat their addled Easter eggs. So perish the ungodly! I hope you will have a good holiday and fine weather.

It used to be said of an Englishman that after breakfast he exclaimed, "What a fine day. Let us go and kill something." I suppose a Welshman says, "What a fine day: let us go and dis-establish something."

Relations within the Government, apart from the disagreements and "tiffs" on foreign policy, seemed markedly improved, and Lord Rosebery and Harcourt were in frequent and friendly communication. They were both present and spoke at a gathering at the National Liberal Club on May 9, at which Harcourt, referring to the repeated assurances of the Tories that they were doomed, remarked :

. . . The circumstance reminds me of one of the most comical incidents in the curiosities of literature, when Dean Swift and his friends determined to prove that an unfortunate man named Partridge was dead. . . . The unhappy man remonstrated, but those able literary correspondents described to their own satisfaction all the symptoms of his fatal illness and the circumstances of his decease. And really Her Majesty's ministers have been for a long time in the position of Mr. Partridge. . . .

Harcourt's prestige in the financial world, due to the Budget and to his maintenance of the orthodox tradition in currency, won him recognition in the City, where he was entertained at a banquet given by the Lord Mayor and attended by representatives of all parties. In his speech, he said, referring to the difficulties of a Chancellor of the Exchequer, "Of all things in the world the easiest to invent, according to my observation, is fresh expenditure. It has this advantage—you will find everybody or nearly everybody ready to vote for it. (Laughter.) Of all things the most difficult to invent is a new tax ; and it has this disadvantage—that you will find every one ready to vote against it." (Laughter.) He declared his aim to be "to maintain and extend the policy of the great teachers at whose feet I have sat—the policy which was inaugurated by Peel and consummated by Gladstone."

There were many "breezes" and "scenes" as the Session advanced, one of the most entertaining arising out of the proposal of the Government to erect a statue to Cromwell. More than 200 years had passed since Oliver's desecrated body was hung in chains at Tyburn, and since then no Government had ventured to give him a place of honour among the immortal dead. Harcourt was in favour of belated justice to the Protector, and writing to

Lord Rosebery and Mr. Shaw Lefevre, the Commissioner of Works, on the subject, he insisted that the tribute should not be half-hearted :

II, DOWNING STREET, *April 6*.—I am entirely against putting Cromwell anywhere but in his proper place, as *Ruler* of England, between Charles I and Charles II in Westminster Hall.

You might just as well expunge Napoleon from his position between Louis XVI and Louis XVIII. To place him outside amongst a ruck of Prime Ministers is not to treat the *Protector* with proper respect.

As to locating him in the damp ditch which has been dug round the façade of Westminster Hall in the place marked A. in the plan, it would be an indignity from which I think the Royalists in the first days of the Restoration would have shrunk.

I don't much fancy him as a beggar on horseback riding in the direction which such persons generally take ; but if he is to have an equestrian statue I think he should be put side by side with his predecessor at Charing Cross.

I am clearly in favour of his being put in his proper place—inside Westminster Hall—and nowhere else. . . .

When the debate on the subject came on in the House of Commons on June 14, however, there was fierce opposition to the proposed statue, and though in the end the scheme was carried by a majority of 15 votes, the statue was not consigned to the place which Harcourt deemed to belong to it, but to the "damp ditch" outside Westminster Hall where it stands to-day as it were in sombre reverie or mute protest against the indignity of its outcast state.

But in spite of the steadiness with which the tiny majority at the command of the Government met the daily attacks of the Opposition it was evident that the end was near. Mr. Balfour ridiculed the programme of "filling up the cup" as a huge joke, but expressed the hope that it would not be a tedious joke. The anticipation that the Government was doomed, if not by external attack then by internal dissension, led to the suggestion that both Harcourt and Lord Rosebery should withdraw, and that the Government should be reconstructed in a Radical sense. An alternative aim, for which Labouchere was ceaselessly working, was the retirement of Lord Rosebery and the substitution of Harcourt. Meantime the two protagonists seemed amiable



enough in their personal relations. Lord Rosebery pleased Harcourt by making him a trustee of the British Museum, and Harcourt no doubt astonished Lord Rosebery by shedding his "skinflint" habits and appealing to him to support the purchase for the Museum of the great collection of drawings of old masters and engravings made by Malcolm of Poltalloch—said to be the finest private collection of the sort in Europe. "The Exchequer is flourishing at present, and I am not indisposed to find the money for it," he wrote to Lord Rosebery. Connoisseurship was not one of Harcourt's foibles or virtues, but he had a sound taste and a real interest in securing the treasures of art for the public, as the conspicuous part he played in the formation of the Tate Gallery had already witnessed.

## v

The end came suddenly and unexpectedly. Writing to his sister on June 16 about the glories of Malwood—"the sight of the roses is such as I never beheld: it is worth travelling hundreds of miles to behold"—he added that "since I succeeded in getting the whole time of the House I think the Government will jog on for a bit." Three days later Gladstone dealt the Government a blow by withdrawing his pair, as an indication that he had "an open mind upon the Welsh Disestablishment Bill." "This affair of Mr. Gladstone's pair, respecting which I never heard a word till I read it in *The Times* this morning, is so serious that I must ask to see you about it to-morrow morning," wrote Harcourt to Lord Rosebery. But something more serious occurred two days after. It was a day of sensations in the House. It opened with the announcement of the resignation of the Duke of Cambridge from the position of Commander-in-Chief—a triumph for the astute diplomacy of Campbell-Bannerman—and it ended with the defeat of the Government on Campbell-Bannerman's own salary as War Minister. The attack was cleverly engineered by the Opposition on the question of the supply of cordite, in reference to which Campbell-Bannerman refused, properly

enough, to give information. " I will not give the figures to the world," he said stoutly ; " the public service is not benefited by recriminations of one party against another." Outside in the pleasant June evening Harcourt was sitting on the Terrace. " Thank heaven," he said, " there is one night on which we need not fear a crisis." A few minutes afterwards the division bell rang, and when the members trooped back into the House from the division lobby a curious little comedy of errors was witnessed. First the figures were handed to Ellis, the Liberal Whip, and there was a cheer from the Liberals. Ellis looked at the figures, and passed them to Akers Douglas, the Tory Whip, and there were thunders from the Opposition. But having glanced at the figures Douglas handed the paper back to Ellis who gave it a final scrutiny and returned it again to Douglas, who now recovered his arithmetical powers and announced the defeat of the Government by seven votes. " It is a *chance* blow, but in my opinion a fatal one," wrote Harcourt to Lord Rosebery that night, sending the news by messenger to Epsom. The next day the Prime Minister tendered his resignation to the Queen, and Harcourt in his speech (June 24) in the House of Commons announcing the end of the Government, took his farewell of the leadership of the House <sup>1</sup> :

. . . Well, sir (he said), that is all that it is necessary or proper that I should say upon the present occasion. Before I sit down I hope I may be permitted to say a word to the House. In quitting office I relinquish also a position which I have always regarded as one of greater responsibility and higher obligation even than any office under the Crown. It has always been my desire, unequal as I have felt myself to the task, to maintain the ancient dignity of this great House, of this famous Assembly. In that arduous

<sup>1</sup> W. V. H. had a very friendly reception from a crowd at Palace Yard on his way down. I took Bobby under the Gallery. C. Bannerman had a great reception when he came in as did Arthur Balfour and a more moderate one for Chamberlain. When W. V. H. came in the whole of our party rose and cheered for several minutes, waving their hats. There was a long pause and then W. V. H. made his statement of our resignation, ending with a few very pathetic sentences of farewell to the House as its Leader, in which he almost broke down. [H.]

duty, under circumstances of no ordinary difficulty, I have had great and necessary assistance. I desire to tender to the gentlemen with whom I have the honour to act my grateful thanks for the constant, the unfailing support which I have received from them in the task which has been devolved upon me. I desire also to acknowledge the courtesy which I have invariably received from my political opponents, and, sir, if it be not too presumptuous to adopt the words of one of my most illustrious predecessors, I would ask leave to say that for every man who has taken part in the noble conflicts of parliamentary life, the chiefest ambition of all ambitions, whether in the majority or in the minority, must be to stand well with the House of Commons.

"Whatever we may think of the policy of the Government which he leads in this House, we all recognize the right hon. gentleman as one of the ornaments of this Assembly, and as one who has ever had the dignity of this Assembly in view," was the tribute which Mr. Balfour paid to Harcourt at the close. The last official act of Harcourt was to ask Lord Rosebery for a K.C.B. to Mr. Alfred Milner. "It would be to me a painful disappointment," he said, "if upon leaving office I were unable to testify my sense of the great obligations under which the Government, and more especially I personally, lie to Alfred Milner for his signal financial services to this administration." Harcourt handed the Treasury over to Hicks-Beach with a warm offer to "place at your disposal all the information I can give," and with the assurance that "things are very serene in this department."

The verdict of the Press on the Government that had fallen was a verdict for Harcourt, and it was admitted that whatever the failures of the Ministry, his leadership had been a memorable success. The *Spectator*, not usually friendly to him, expressed the general feeling of all parties in a remarkable eulogy, in the course of which it said (June 29):

... Sir William Harcourt's sun does not sink without a little glory. He succeeded the most famous orator of the age. He inherited his legacy of wellnigh impossible tasks; and in at least one of these labours of Hercules he gained an amount of success that will not soon be forgotten. He passed a great democratic budget,

and he passed it by the help of that English moderation which it was the cue of many of his colleagues and perhaps of the greater number of his followers to depreciate and despise. . . . He began with a great disappointment and a great difficulty. Lord Rosebery, a man vastly his inferior in sagacity and force, was put over his head by the cry of a Party which had discerned Lord Rosebery's sensitive "feelers" for new ideas and new currents of popular sympathy, without discerning his weakness and his shiftiness. He had a chief over him whose manœuvres he could not control and whose indecision he could not respect. This no doubt must have tried Sir William Harcourt almost beyond endurance, and that he managed to endure it at all is greatly to the credit of his strong will. . . . Without Sir William Harcourt, the Government of 1894-95 would have made itself ridiculous, and even the Government of 1892-94 would have hardly held together, for at his age Mr. Gladstone could not have led the House of Commons without so able a lieutenant. . . .

In the hour of his defeat, Harcourt stood higher in the esteem, and even the affection, of friends and foes alike in the House than at any period of his career, and Hicks-Beach expressed the common sentiment of all parties when he wrote (June 26), "I sincerely hope your words the other day did not mean a final ending to your leadership of the House of Commons. I really mean it when I say that having seen not a few leaders during the last thirty years I think you are the best." It was the tribute that Harcourt would have most desired, for, before everything else, he was a House of Commons man.

## CHAPTER XIX

### CATASTROPHE OF 1895

Election issues—The Jingo spirit in the country—Harcourt's battle on local option—Defeat at Derby—Seat found in Monmouthshire—Tory opposition to Mr. Gully—Final breach with Lord Rosebery—Leadership of the Party—Surplus for Hicks-Beach.

WITH the fall of the Rosebery Government, Harcourt's official life ended. Nearly ten years of parliamentary service were still before him, but they were years of opposition, and his farewell to the leadership of the House, which Hicks-Beach had hoped was premature, proved to be final. The Salisbury Government in coming into office at once dissolved Parliament, and appealed to the country. There was little doubt in any mind as to the result of the appeal, and what doubt there may have been was dismissed by the dissensions in the Liberal Party and the confused strategy adopted. Lord Rosebery proposed to fight the battle on the issue of the House of Lords,<sup>1</sup> and in a speech to the Eighty Club asked, "For what purpose do you demand a majority? You say you cannot present a dozen questions in line. Is there one question that embraces and involves them all?"

<sup>1</sup> The Journal (June 27) says: The Cabinet met for the last time at 11, sat for nearly 1½ hours, and had a most peaceful time. They took mutual farewells, and discussed their dissolution policy. Rosebery asked W. V. H. to state his views first. W. V. H. said he supposed that they would all say that they stuck to the old programme, but that each man would have liberty for his individual *italics*. J. Morley said he would fight on Home Rule—and on that alone. Rosebery made a mild protest against the pushing of the Newcastle Programme, with which he declared he had never been associated. W. V. H. suggested that to meet his views the word Newcastle might be put in brackets.

I say there is. I say that question is the question of the domination of the House of Lords. . . . If you deal with that, successfully it facilitates the dealing with all the others ; but, if you deal with one of the other questions first, it in no respect facilitates dealing with the others."

It is pretty generally agreed to-day that Lord Rosebery's view of the strategy of the occasion was sound. That it would have won the General Election cannot be supposed. Events had gone too definitely against the late Government for that. There was a tidal wave of Jingoism rising throughout the country. Speculation had seized the public mind to an unprecedented degree, and the Stock Exchange had become the centre of the national life. The riches of the Rand and the discoveries of gold in Western Australia and Canada had created a feverish excitement in the public mind that penetrated every part of the country, and the names of Rhodes, Barney Barnato and Whitaker Wright, the magicians who were going to make every one rich without labour, were on all tongues. The great brewing interest, feeling itself menaced by the recurrent demands for reform, exploited the mood of the public and, while extracting hundreds of millions from the pockets of the investor, enormously enhanced its political power by mobilizing a vast body of new shareholders to its defence. To this orgy of gambling the genius of Mr. Rudyard Kipling gave the appropriate glamour of something that passed for patriotism, and his banjo music, strangely interlarded with appeals to the " Lord Our God Most High," led the nation valorously to battle against any " breeds without the law " who stood in its path of profitable exploitation.

It was not a promising moment for an attack on the House of Lords, and it was made less promising by the Bills of the late Government. The Welsh Bill and the Local Option Bill had given the two most powerful forces in the country a common motive of hostility to the Liberal Party, and the new feeling of sympathy with Ireland, chilled by the unhappy Parnell episode, had diminished with the retirement of the great man who had inspired it

by the intensity of his own passion. Nevertheless, the challenge to the House of Lords, while it would not have given the Liberals the victory, would have furnished a comprehensive issue for the struggle, and one which, in defeat, would have kept the ranks together. But neither Harcourt nor Mr. Morley shared Lord Rosebery's view of the situation. They were satisfied that, in the circumstances, the attack on the Lords would be "a damp squib," and that the best course was to fight on their programme of reform. Mr. Morley made it quite clear in a speech delivered at Manchester on his way to the North to meet his constituents that he proposed to stake everything on the Home Rule issue, which he said the Liberals by the pledges they had given in 1892 were bound to keep in the forefront of their programme, and next day (July 5) Harcourt declared with equal emphasis that he regarded the liquor question as the most pressing and vital subject of reform. He defended the record of the late Government, and charged the Conservatives with clamouring for more expenditure on armaments and resisting the taxation which would provide for their demands :

. . . The Government that preceded us (he said) boasted of their great naval administration. There never was a Government, we were told, which had placed the navy of England on so magnificent a footing ; but when we came into office, although they had spent enormous sums of money, and although they had borrowed sums which they left us to pay (laughter), they immediately began to state that the navy of England was in a deplorable condition and that it was absolutely indispensable for the safety of the country that a large additional sum should be expended. Well, we were called on to make good their shortcomings and at the same time to pay their debts. I had to face a deficit of nearly five millions which was the legacy of their administration. The only thing we had to do was to find the money. (A voice : Put your hand in our pocket.) No, we did not put our hand into the pocket of that gentleman who has just made the exclamation. (Laughter.) The only thing to do was to meet this taxation by adjusting the burden according to the means of the people who were called upon to pay it, and to apportion the pressure according to the means of enduring it. (Cheers.) Now the conduct of the Unionist Party in this matter has not been, and will not be, forgotten. They were the

loudest in the demand for increased expenditure, but there was no kind of taxation which they did not oppose. Take the death duties, they would not have that. The income tax ; they did not want that. The beer duties ; they voted against that. And the spirit duties they also resisted. They attacked them all. They entered into every kind of factious combination against a Budget which was to find the money which they demanded should be expended. . . .

He quoted from a " religious " newspaper which, referring to the Budget, had declared, " We so thoroughly distrust the present (Liberal) Government that if they introduced a Bill confirming the Ten Commandments we should have no scruple in voting against it," and then turning to the issues of the contest put local option in the forefront of his programme :

. . . It has been insinuated (he said) that I stood alone in this matter. That statement is false. The Liberal Government stood firmly by the Bill that I had the honour to introduce and I had then, and have now, their undivided support. I have been jeered at as if I was insincere in the prosecution of this measure. I care little, I should be very unfit for political life if I cared at all for such sneers. . . . I believe from the bottom of my heart that of all social reforms it is the most necessary, the most urgent and the most beneficial, and if I suspected that the Liberal Party or the Liberal Government intended to play false to the cause of temperance, I should indeed believe that the Liberal faith had been betrayed.

He pointed out that this was not an exclusively party question, that he had the assurance of support from men of all political faiths, and, referring to Salisbury's resistance to all schemes of temperance reform, said that here was a fair issue : Was the drink trade a great evil that required legislation, or was it not an evil ? " I desire no fairer issue on which to take the opinion of the English people." This strong challenge to their interests brought the trade into the field with every weapon at their command, and their hostility was increased by a procession organized by the temperance people on the second day of the campaign. In this procession the publican and his customers were gayed with appropriate costumes and very red noses. The other side proceeded to take off the gloves. Everywhere there were placards, " Who took the duty off the Irishman's whisky



and put it on the Englishman's beer?" Lord Burton sent round a letter to all the publicans urging them to do their best to oust Harcourt. Moreover the Labour organizations, which had hitherto advised their members to vote for the Liberal candidates, gave no such advice on this occasion, telling their members that they should vote as they pleased. When the result of the poll was declared it was found that Harcourt and his Liberal colleagues were defeated, the figures being :

Bemrose	.	.	.	.	.	.	7,907
Drage	.	.	.	.	.	.	7,076
Harcourt	.	.	.	.	.	.	6,785
Roe	.	.	.	.	.	.	6,475

"It is not on account of this defeat that we shall abandon any of the principles for which we have contended," said Harcourt in addressing the electors after the result had been declared. "We appeal to moral forces, which in the long run are always victorious. No great reform has ever been achieved without waiting a long time, and after many defeats; but to men who thoroughly believe in them and are prepared to make sacrifices for them in the end victory is assured." The news of the defeat created an immense impression in the country. "It is a horrid catastrophe for us all," wrote Mr. Morley (July 15). "Newcastle is almost certain to follow suit, and my life in the House of Commons will be snapped. But I'll die game. My repulse will matter little, but yours cuts me to the heart." Among the letters of condolence which reached him was one from Lord Rosebery, and the following from Gladstone :

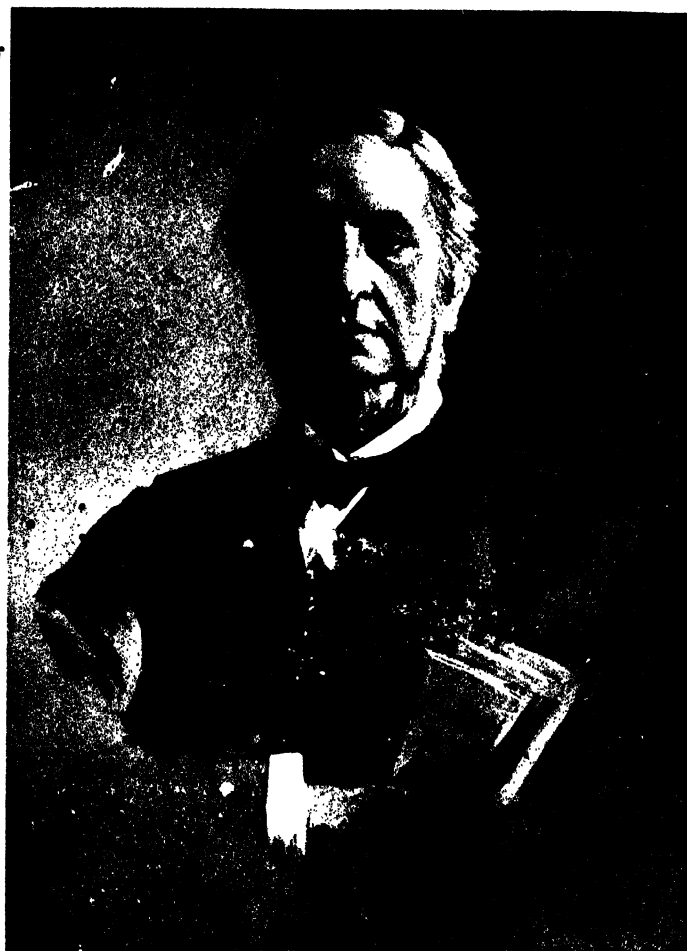
*Gladstone to Harcourt.*

HAWARDEN CASTLE, *July 15, 1895.*—Our Sunday's calm was broken yesterday by a thunderclap in the announcement of the result at Derby, and to-day I have read your speech. It is a cruel blow, struck by most ignoble hands; but you have met it like a man, and your best or most critical friend could not wish the speech to be other than it is.

We shall, I dare say, in so interesting a case, hear more of the interior workings of that engineering by which you have been displaced. The worst of the matter is the difficulty in these days of







*Sir William Vernon Harcourt act 68*  
*from a water colour drawing by Cecil Cuddehoun at Norwich*



finding an alternative seat. But you have encountered this overthrow by going ahead of the average combatants like an old Homeric warrior, and you have thereby laid the temperance party under such obligations that if there be anywhere a temperance man with a safe candidature, safely transferable, he ought to waive it for you.

I do not feel sure that local option may not in the future be better propelled by independent action than by a Liberal Government.

Should the Tories obtain a majority really heavy, how Chamberlain will shake in his shoes ! . . .

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

THE GROSVENOR HOTEL, VICTORIA STATION, S.W., *July 16, 1895.*  
—I must thank you most sincerely for your kind letter. The poll at Derby was not altogether a surprise to me as I found on my arrival that the public feeling there had a good deal changed.

Drink had no doubt something to do with it, but the main cause was bad trade. The bulk of the constituency is found in the great railway works, and the men had been for two years on an allowance of 4 days a week. The moment Parliament was dissolved the Midland Railway Company and the large ironworks put all the men on six days a week. Nothing could stand against this, especially when fortified by beer.

The conduct of the clergy and the Church was very disgraceful. They were active and ostensible promoters of all the worst arts employed to debauch the constituency. There is no greater argument against establishments and endowments than the sight of the immoralities which men will commit in order to retain them. . . .

I believe I have a safe seat reserved for me in West Monmouthshire.

“What can I say?” wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley when Newcastle followed the lead of Derby. “You know what I feel. We have had a taste of the democracy. It is not pleasant. But we must fight on.” He himself had decided to “fight on,” and when a rumour gained widespread currency that he proposed to retire from public life he sent a message to the *Daily News* denying any such intention. “I shall persevere,” he said, “as long as I am able, in the service of the Liberal cause and the maintenance of the principles to which I am attached.” A vacancy was at once made for him by C. M. Warmington, Q.C., the member for West Monmouth, and Harcourt proceeded thither, as it

was said, to "wipe out the triumph of the beer barrel at Derby." He renewed his declarations on Ireland and his attacks on the House of Lords, but he still kept local option in the forefront of his crusade. He was not ashamed to confess, he told his audience at Ebbw Vale, that he had changed his views on the subject of drink. And why had he changed them? At the Home Office he had the unhappy view of all the misery and crime of the country, and he came to this conviction—that of all the sources of crime there was none more fertile and none more certain than was found in excessive drinking. It destroyed the home, it led to every species of evil, and ultimately he had no hesitation in saying, as one who had for many years had the terrible responsibility of determining whether men should be sent to dreadful death on the gallows, that of ten men who found their way to the gallows eight owed it to excessive drink. That experience had converted him to the view that the public must be vested with the control of an industry which so profoundly touched the public life. He claimed that it was the function of Liberalism to attack great evils regardless of immediate success or failure, instancing slavery and protection, and declared that he would rather fall in a good cause than triumph in a bad one.

When the result of the poll was declared on July 23, Harcourt was found at the head by a majority of 5,287. But the General Election as a whole had given an unexpectedly great victory to the Unionists, the composition of the new Parliament being :

Conservatives	.	.	.	.	.	.	340
Liberal Unionists	.	.	.	.	.	.	71
Liberals	.	.	.	.	.	.	177
Parnellites	.	.	.	.	.	.	12
Anti-Parnellites	.	.	.	.	.	.	70

The Conservatives and Unionists had gained ninety-eight seats, and the Liberal majority of forty-three in the last Parliament was turned into a Unionist majority of 152. The change in voting was not anything like proportionate to this turnover. The poll had not been a heavy one, and

the actual volume of votes shifted to make the sweeping change was not a quarter of a million. The Roseberyite Liberal Press regarded Harcourt's share in the election with some resentment. The general argument was that he had been too independent and had invited a rebuff, which must hit not only himself but the Liberal Party, by his preoccupation with the unpopular subject of local option. There may have been some justice in this view, but the broad truth is that the mood of the country at the time was hostile to Liberalism. The gold fever was in its blood, and the arrogant nationalism of Mr. Kipling and the glamour of Rhodes's imperialism were leading it to strange adventures. At Hawarden the completeness of the overthrow left Gladstone in dismay. Writing from there to Harcourt (July 28), Mr. Morley said :

. . . I came here last night. The famous old couple are as wonderful as ever. He is very keen, and in excellent health. I have not had time for much talk with him, but the crash of the Party has been more unexpected by him than by you or me. His amazement finds vent in some of the epithets that we know so well—"monstrous," "astounding," etc., etc.

One incident in the election had given offence to Harcourt's sense of the decorum of parliamentary usage. The Conservatives, smarting under the election of Gully to the Speakership, not only opposed his re-election at Carlisle, but induced Mr. Balfour to write letters supporting the opposition. Harcourt thereupon wrote to Gully :

*Harcourt to Gully.*

DERBY, July 11.—I have read with equal surprise and regret Mr. Balfour's letter of July 9th.

As one who entertains profound regard for the established and honourable traditions of the House of Commons I cannot but deplore that the Leader of that House should have thought it right to take a principal part in an electioneering attack on the seat of the Speaker. Such a proceeding is contrary to the whole spirit and practice which has hitherto prevailed in our party contests, and cannot but have a most injurious effect upon our parliamentary life. It is without precedent in the past, and I sincerely trust may find no imitators in the future.

It is well known that the Speaker from the nature of the office



he has lately filled cannot take an active part in the political contest, and this consideration is one which should restrain every one, and most of all the Leader of the House of Commons, from taking an unfair advantage of his situation.

The pretence upon which this is done is stated by Mr. Balfour in a manner which is neither accurate nor candid. He accuses the late Government of having endeavoured to force on the House of Commons a political partisan. No one knows better than Mr. Balfour that this was not the case. The late Government put forward in the first instance Mr. Courtney, a member of great experience who was not a political supporter, and that proposal was rejected by Mr. Balfour and his friends.

I am glad to think that this most unfair and unprecedented proceeding will, as always happens, recoil upon its authors, and secure for you the sympathy and support of right-minded persons.

Gully was duly elected, and when the new Parliament met his reappointment as Speaker was unchallenged, an act of grace due in part no doubt to the sense that the opposition to him at Carlisle had been a discreditable incident.

## II

In writing to H. H. Fowler when the full measure of the disaster was apparent, Harcourt said, "It is very disgusting to have left these fellows such a splendid surplus as they will have. . . . But whatever their surplus they will spend more. We shipwrecked mariners must collect together and establish a sort of Robinson Crusoe life on our desert island." But the troubles of the shipwrecked mariners were not yet fully told. As not infrequently happens after defeat, civil dissension was added to the distresses of the unhappy Liberal remnant. It began with an ultimatum from Dalmeny. Harcourt, after going to the Treasury, had given up his house in town, and was in some difficulty therefore to know where ex-Ministers in the House of Commons should meet to receive the Queen's Speech and consider the course of action to be taken upon it. He wrote to Spencer asking if he could put a room at Spencer House at their disposal for the purpose—Campbell-Bannerman, who had hitherto obliged them, being in Marienbad. Spencer promptly agreed (August 7), adding in a

postscript, "I shall let Rosebery know what you propose as to the meeting next week of the House of Commons Front Bench." Harcourt replied that he had heard from Mr. Balfour that the Queen's Speech would have "nothing in it," but that they must meet for form's sake, and that he thought Spencer House would be the best place as he understood Lord Rosebery's house in Berkeley Square was not *monté*. A few days later Harcourt received from Lord Rosebery a copy of a letter he had sent to Spencer intimating that with the fall of the late Government his political connection with Harcourt, which was wholly official, had terminated, and that in no circumstances could he renew it. On receiving this communication, Harcourt, whose previous letter from Lord Rosebery had been one expressing regret at his defeat at Derby, wrote :

*Harcourt to Lord Rosebery.*

August 14, 1895.—I have received to-day with equal surprise and pain your letter of the 12th inst., which has been forwarded from Malwood.

It seems to me that for the present at least the wisest course is that I should attempt no reply to it till I obtain some further light as to the causes which have led to your writing it.

But, as you assume that I should "agree with you as to the necessity of the step," I have simply to say that I can in no way assent to it.

My view, as you know, has been from the first that no personal considerations should stand in the way of common action for the good of the Party, and this duty seems to me if possible more imperative at the present moment in the face of the disasters which have befallen it.

What followed is best stated in the following memorandum by Spencer, dated August 16 :

The letters from Lord Rosebery of the 12th and 13th August were not answered by letter. On the 13th I sent him a telegram to the effect that the House of Commons ex-colleagues would meet on Wednesday at Mr. Bryce's and not at Spencer House—without any Lords.

I saw him on Wednesday morning.

What occurred was that Sir William Harcourt met me on 13th August at Spencer House at 11.30, not having yet received Lord Rosebery's letter.

I gave him the original to read, and we then settled about the separate meeting of ex-colleagues.

He judged that Lord R.'s letter meant that either he or Lord R. were to retire from the Liberal Party, and said that he (Harcourt) had no intention of retirement.

Lord R. admitted that such an interpretation would naturally be placed on the letter.

It was subsequently settled that the tone of Lord R.'s letter of August 13 should be adopted and that only ex-Cabinet colleagues should be told of the ultimatum for the present.

Sir William H. at first said that he would take no notice of Lord R.'s communication. He called it to me a damned piece of impertinence—the only bitter words used by him in the three or four interviews I had with him.

Subsequently he wrote a short note to Lord R. expressing the surprise and pain with which he had received the letter.

Kimberley (informed by letter by me), Ripon, Tweedmouth, Asquith, Fowler were told what had occurred by me, and Bryce was told by Rosebery.

R. and H. did not meet, but I negotiated generally the sort of line to be taken in the Address debate.

Harcourt assumed the air of absolute ignorance that any serious difference had existed between him and R.

Personal differences he deprecated as far as they interfered with political action. In old days, as in case of Canning and Castlereagh, these ended in a duel. The letter would have had this effect, and he might have been shot in the buttocks !!

Meanwhile Harcourt was left to do the extremely dull work of the Front Bench in the House. "Asquith went off to Scotland for good yesterday," he says in a letter to his wife. "Campbell-Bannerman will not return from Marienbad. Bryce only is left, and he is off this week to the Cape. Acland is ill, and Fowler shows up rarely." The wreck of the Party seemed complete, and the decision of Lord Rosebery left it apparently without any hope of immediate reconstruction. Ripon, who had throughout been hostile to Harcourt's leadership, in a letter to Kimberley (August 17), said : <sup>1</sup>

*Ripon to Kimberley.*

... I went up to London on Wednesday, Spencer having telegraphed to me to say that he thought I had better do so, and on

<sup>1</sup> *Life of the First Marquess of Ripon*, by Lucien Wolf, p. 238 seq.

arrival received the startling news of Rosebery's "irrevocable" decision not to meet Harcourt in council any more." You heard from Spencer what has passed; I need not therefore repeat it, and I have little fresh to add. . . . I saw Rosebery himself and had half-an-hour's talk with him—he seemed quite determined, and said that he would not consent to be bound by anything that Harcourt might say or do.

Harcourt professed to take the matter very easily and to treat it as an ebullition of bad temper. He was as mild and civil as possible in manner and language, and I thought anxious to be conciliatory towards his other colleagues. No doubt he sees that Rosebery's step is a very good thing for him (H.), and that if he persists in the intention he has now announced and brings things thereby to a deadlock, it will not redound to his advantage with the Party. You and I know the provocations R. has had, but the Party are little acquainted with them, and will look on him as the cause of a fatal quarrel. . . . If Rosebery persists the Party will become leaderless, and must somehow or other choose between R. and H. or select a new leader. If he gives way he will lose dignity and greatly weaken his influence with those who know what has passed. It is a most unpleasant prospect. . . .

There were anxious attempts in many quarters to patch up a *modus vivendi*, and for a brief moment it seemed possible that Mr. Asquith, whose prestige had greatly increased during the late Parliament, would succeed to the leadership of the Party. In the end, however, the resumption of the 1894-5 arrangement was agreed on, by which Kimberley and Harcourt became, as it were, joint leaders of the two Houses, with Lord Rosebery's leadership of the Party officially preserved. This arrangement, as far as Kimberley and Harcourt were concerned, worked smoothly until 1898, Lord Rosebery continuing to speak in the country until his formal resignation of the leadership in December 1896.

The question of the leadership furnished the Press with a piquant controversy during the autumn, but for those concerned it was in abeyance. Harcourt himself, relieved of the cares of office, revelled in the delights of Malwood, the only interruptions of his home life being a visit to Holland with his wife, who had, when her father was American Minister at the Hague, spent much of her childhood there. Although politically an international man and a good

'European, Harcourt had plenty of insular prejudices and little passion for foreigners, and neither Holland nor the Dutch made a favourable impression on him. Writing to his sister "Em," he said (October 20):

. . . I was glad to see Holland *for once*—though the country is inconceivably ugly and there is very little fine architecture even in the great towns. There are of course fine galleries of Dutch pictures, Rembrandts, Frans Hals, Ruysdaels, etc., but very few Rubens or Cuyps. I confess the Dutch pictures don't give me much pleasure. The subjects—persons and landscapes—all ugly though finely painted, and I remain faithful to the Italian art and sky. The Dutch are a dead-alive people with little spirit or enterprise. I attended a sitting of the Dutch H. of C. which seemed duller than even our own. . . .

With leisure at his command he embarked on discussions with Gladstone on subjects as various as Butler's *Analogy*, bimetallism and agricultural rating.

In one of these, written in reply to a note announcing the recovery of Mrs. Gladstone from an illness which had alarmed her friends, he describes at some length the bright prospects of the year's revenue, and continues:

*Harcourt to Gladstone.*

MALWOOD, October 27, 1895.—. . . Bimetallism I hope is "blowing over," and your letter to G. Peel was of immense service. The agrarian party in Germany and the Free Silver party in the U.S. are much weaker than they were.

Beach is sound enough himself on these subjects. But he will be much coerced by colleagues, and Goschen admitted to me himself that he had declined the Exchequer foreseeing the difficulties he would have to face in regard to economic heresies amongst his colleagues. They will find it hard enough to do anything for their agricultural supporters, who indeed deserve great sympathy. But what can they do? The Land Tax is certainly most unequal and unjust in its incidence, falling most heavily on the corn lands of the East and Midlands which are the most depressed and most lightly on the North and West which have suffered least.

It is true it was nearly as bad sixty years ago, but I do not see the same elements of recuperation now. The Government will have plenty of money, but the demands on them will be far more than they can satisfy. Already I see *The Times* is getting up a Russian scare about China. But, though Salisbury talks big, I think generally he is pretty discreet in action.

Your note on Pitt and the *Analogy* interests me much. I remember well more than fifty-five years ago reading Wilberforce's *Life at Nuneham*, and the observations of Pitt on the *Analogy*, which I read about the same time, have dwelt in my memory ever since. I did not apply to it at the time the searching criticism which you have brought to bear upon it. I only possess the *one volume* edition "revised and condensed from the original" by the Bishop in 1868. But he gives the same account of the conversation, so that at that date the son had not altered his opinion of its accuracy. . . . I think Pitt must have said something of the sort, as it was not an observation likely to have been invented altogether. And it must be considered that when Pitt recommended the *Analogy* to Wilberforce the object of his conversation was to cool rather than exalt Wilberforce's religious feelings. I do not doubt, as suggested by the Bishop, that Pitt's inspiration on these subjects came from Pretyman, which was mighty dry light according to my recollection of his writings, which my father used to read to us. Butler's *Sermons* used to be in my time at Trin. Coll., Cambridge, a great textbook in ethics and metaphysics with which we had to be well acquainted.

Is it not of him that Queen Caroline asked Blackburne (the ex-buccaneer who became Archbishop of York and whose swarthy portrait is in the dining-room at Bishophorpe) "Whether Butler was dead," to which the Archbishop replied: "No, madam, but he is buried," a retort which led to his successive preferments.

I shall look with the deepest interest to your miracle of resuscitation, which I feel sure will be more effectual even than that of Queen Caroline. How many people under thirty years of age know that there was a Bishop Butler, and still fewer have enjoyed the resources of his profound intellect amidst all the froth and bustle of modern life. It seems to me the worst feature is the way in which the great monuments of the past are buried in piles of recent rubbish, and you will render a great service in rescuing from oblivion a *masterpiece* of ancient intellectual art. I think it were to be desired that there were more excavations of the past and fewer exhibitions of the present. I shall eagerly avail myself of your permission to retain the autograph proof page you have sent as a precious memorial of your latest labour.

Your letter and the spirit which it breathes of unfailing cheerfulness and unrelaxing activity is very refreshing and gives great encouragement to us who feel the weight of advancing years. It teaches us all to follow *haud passibus æquis* in the example you have set, which will be always memorable. . . .

Were you aware that the virtuous Wilberforce was an habitual opium-eater. This subject is delicately glanced at by the Bishop in reference to his illness in 1788, but my father, who was an intimate friend of Wilberforce, told me he used to keep opium pills in his pocket, which he used to swallow as he walked up and down talking.

His relations with Mr. Morley were now fully restored to their old intimacy, and he incessantly urged him to return to Parliament. When at last Mr. Morley consented to stand for Montrose he wrote (November 26) :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

... I am much rejoiced as are all our Party that you have (as I know much against the grain) resolved to throw your hat once more into the ring. We must never say die, and I feel sure you would not have been able to satisfy yourself that you had been right in retiring from the field. Whether a man is right in once entering on so thankless a pursuit may be well doubted, but when one has once set one's hand to that plough one cannot turn back—even if it be "ploughing the sands."

"It was your doing mainly that I have consented once more to go under the yoke," replied Mr. Morley. "I never look on myself as much of a Parliament man ; but if you and others think otherwise, here I am." To Mr. Morley Harcourt wrote (November 14) : "What an excellent speech of Asquith's at Bristol. It is just what I should have wished to say, only said better." And to Mr. Asquith himself he wrote, with something of his ancient fervour for references to speeches and official documents, on the subject of agricultural rates. With his successor at the Treasury, Hicks-Beach, he discussed at great length the question of the Indian Army Pensions Fund, and, referring to the duty of standing firmly by both the sinking funds, old and new, said (November 18) :

*Harcourt to Hicks-Beach.*

... You may be sure I had to meet very strong temptations in my later years to tamper with both. With your fine surplus happily you will not be so highly tried. Of all articles of prestige that of being the only nation which is really paying off its debt is in my opinion one of the greatest, and as Balfour says is "worth many battleships." It is a comfortable and reassuring reflection that we could to-morrow from the sinking fund interest borrow 200 millions (the amount of the French indemnity), in case of a great emergency without any additional taxation. This is our real war chest.

"The surplus you have provided," replied Hicks-Beach (November 19), "bids fair to be really alarming, and

all mouths are opening wide. There will, as you say, be plenty of squeaking next spring." Harcourt was much occupied at this time, as the letter to Gladstone quoted above shows, with the Government's prospective policy of relieving the rates on agricultural land out of the Exchequer. Writing to H. H. Fowler on the subject, he said :

*Harcourt to H. H. Fowler.*

MALWOOD, December 2.— . . . The most serious thing is, however, A. Milner's paper, which he tells me you have seen. . . . The pith of it is to show that land is more heavily taxed for imperial purposes than any other property whether houses, funds, etc. This of course enormously strengthens their case for relief as to rates. This conclusion depends of course on the greatly diminished value of the land on which the imperial taxation is raised. He certainly takes a very low figure when he puts the capital value at eighteen years' purchase—which may be true of the distressed districts, but I should think was too low for the country generally. But it is very little use to aver against Milner on these points.

The whole calculation really turns on the land tax, which hitherto has been treated not as a tax at all but a rent charge (see what Mill says on this). If the land tax were out of the question, the whole point of greater taxation of land would be out of the discussion. You may remember that in the course of the Budget debates I condemned the land tax and intimated an intention of dealing with it. If any method could be found of making the land a present of the land tax I should quite approve. But it is not easy.

Chaplin's claim to bring in the *reduced* land tax as a present charge on land seems to me absurd.

As to the rating question, I confess I do not see my way at all. Where is the money to come from ? If they could deal with agricultural land alone the thing might be manageable, but the towns would never stand this.

To the agriculturists the relief would be infinitesimal, not 1s. an acre, for which they would not thank you.

I wish you would look at Dalton's evidence. (*Agricultural Commission*, Vol. III, p. 299, and his paper on "Rating of Personality," p. 504 of the same Vol.)

I have told Lefevre I do not think we ought to take up the attitude of *non-possumus* as regards agricultural relief. On the whole I am quite willing to surrender to them the land tax—the worst of it is that the relief would be geographically so irregular. You and I must really make up our minds as to what line to take before the Session. . . .

With these and other discussions the autumn passed.



The world was at peace, and politics were in the doldrums. The new Government was in power with every prospect of retaining it for several years, and no cloud appeared upon the horizon. But the calm was deceptive, and before the Christmas season was well over a storm which Harcourt had long seen brewing, and the peril of which had led to his strong opposition to the appointment of Hercules Robinson as High Commissioner of South Africa, broke upon a wholly unexpectant world. For the rest of his active life Harcourt was to be submerged in the thing he most loathed, a wave of Jingoism.

## CHAPTER XX

### “DR. JIM”

The Jameson Raid—Demand for Inquiry in the House—Harcourt's confidence that Chamberlain was not involved—Harcourt on the Cipher Telegrams—Correspondence with Chamberlain—Appointment of the South African Committee—The Venezuela difficulty—Harcourt's demand for arbitration—Arbitration Treaty with the United States—The Gorst Education Bill—Mr. Chaplin's Agricultural Rating Bill—Liberal Party organization—An autumn at Malwood—Irish taxation.

THE Christmas season of 1895 passed without a hint that the tranquillity that pervaded the world's affairs was threatened, when suddenly the curtain rose on a drama whose many phases were to engage the mind of the country for some years, and were to culminate in a desolating war. Henceforth the name of “Dr. Jim” was on every tongue, and the strange word “Uitlanders” on every newspaper placard. If the news of the Jameson Raid was a shock to the British public, it would not be true to say that it was a disagreeable shock. The beginnings of a war are rarely unpleasant to the populace, and the prospect of a conflict with the Boers had a peculiar attraction for a people to whom the word “Majuba” still recalled what was popularly regarded as a national humiliation. The Jingo element of the public had never appreciated the magnanimity and wisdom of the action of the Gladstone Government after the reverse of Majuba Hill, had treasured a grudge against the Boers, and had nursed the hope that in due time Colley's defeat would be avenged. With the discovery of the unprecedented riches of the Transvaal the old sore, which would doubtless have been forgotten in another generation, became

inflamed. The development of the Rand had fallen largely into the hands of British adventurers, and the public at home, seized with a gold fever that recalled the legends of the South Sea Bubble, looked with cold hostility upon the people in possession, and were indisposed to accept interference with the industry in any amiable spirit. The grievances of the Transvaal had been simmering for some time before the outbreak of the Outlanders in 1895. Swaziland had, it is true, been placed under the control of the Boers in 1894, but in 1895 Great Britain annexed Amatongaland between Zululand and the Portuguese territory of Lourenço Marques, thus cutting off the Boers from possible direct access to the sea at Kosi Bay. There followed disputes over the rival railway routes, that from the Cape to Johannesburg via the Orange Free State, and that from Delagoa Bay, which was the shorter of the two. In the contest for the traffic between these lines the Boers had closed the drifts over the Vaal to imported goods, and had raised a storm to which Kruger found it necessary to bow. Meantime, the claim of the Outlanders of the Rand to political rights in the Transvaal had assumed a formidable character, and it became known that the National Union contemplated armed revolt against the Kruger regime. The armed police of the Chartered Company was concentrated at Pitsani on the Bechuanaland frontier of the Transvaal, and Dr. Jameson, who was in command of it, crossed into the Transvaal territory on December 29, 1895, in response, it was alleged, to an appeal from the Outlanders in Johannesburg to come to their rescue. Four days later the adventure ended in the surrender of Jameson and his raiders to the Boers at Doornkop.

As soon as the news of the Raid reached England, Chamberlain, who had taken office in the new Government as Colonial Minister, sent peremptory orders to Hercules Robinson to command the raiders to withdraw, and communicated the fact to Kruger. Jameson ignored the command, but his surrender provided another way out of the difficulty of the Colonial Office. At this moment, the

incident was complicated by the dispatch by the German Kaiser to Kruger of a telegram congratulating him on having dealt with the attack "without calling in the help of friendly Powers." It was the impulsive act of an undisciplined mind, smarting under a momentary grievance against the Government of Great Britain, but it left its mark on events. It may be said to have been the beginning of the breach between the two peoples which, almost alone among the great peoples of Europe, had never been engaged in war with each other. The answer of the Government took the form of the dispatch of two regiments to South Africa and the mobilization of a flying column.

In the meantime feeling in England was generally on the side of the raiders, and, as usual in such cases, the Boer became transfigured into something a little lower than the beasts. A grotesque legend of the perils of the Outlanders in Johannesburg became current, and the Poet Laureate added the suitable touch of comedy to the occasion by publishing some jingling lines in *The Times*, beginning, "There are girls in the gold-reef city," probably the only lines he ever wrote that are still remembered. "There is a monstrous poem in favour of Jameson in *The Times* to-day signed by the Poet Laureate," wrote Harcourt to his son. "He ought to be cashiered." Harcourt loathed Jingoism more than any other form of national egotism, and this peculiarly brazen piece of buccaneering filled him with wrath. In a letter to Bryce, who had just returned from South Africa, he said :

*Harcourt to Bryce.*

MALWOOD, January 22.— . . . I know (though I am not at liberty to give my authority) that the S. African directors have advised that they knew of the intention to organize an armed rising at Johannesburg, and that Jameson was at Mafeking with their knowledge and authority to take part in the rising when it occurred. This will no doubt be proved up to the hilt at Pretoria. This being so of course Kruger will say—and be quite justified in saying, "If you condone and justify Rhodes and Jameson and leave the S. African Co. in a position to do again what they have now done, the convention of 1884 is at an end. Am I to be bound to rely on

'you for protection against internal foes when you or those for whom you are responsible are yourselves the principal foes I have to dread. How can you ask me to confer political power on me <sup>P</sup> who in fact avow that the object for which they desire it is mainly to overthrow my Government. If Jameson and Rhodes are English heroes I must seek support and defence against them elsewhere if I cannot rely on my own right arm."

I greatly hope that you will not commit yourself or us on this subject until we have an opportunity of discussing it together. To my mind it is the insolent and lawless aggressiveness of men of the Jameson and Rhodes type that has made the whole world our enemies, who naturally abhor the "brag and grab" policy which we pursue in every part of the globe. . . .

Bryce wrote correcting Harcourt's impression that he was disposed to palliate Jameson's offence, but gave his view of the Outlanders' complaints, expressing doubt whether the Chartered Company was "in it," and suggesting only that the matter should not be prejudiced. Harcourt however remained convinced that the Chartered Company was privy to the Raid, and that the Outlanders as a body were against the rising, which emanated from the "gold bugs." In the meantime, Jameson and his fellow-ring-leaders were dispatched to England by the Boers for trial, Jameson himself being subsequently sentenced to death at Pretoria in his absence. At this stage it was popularly assumed that Jameson had acted independently, and so far as Chamberlain's attitude towards the Raid was concerned Harcourt was wholly complimentary. In a speech in the House (February 11), in which he denounced "this outrageous and disastrous event of the invasion of the Transvaal," he expressed his approval of the Colonial Secretary's "statesman-like courage," and associated himself with Chamberlain's efforts to induce Kruger to make Johannesburg a self-governing municipality. He accompanied his approval with some good-natured chaff of Chamberlain's proposed "Home Rule within Home Rule." "Of course we do not complain of that," he said, "except in so far as people sometimes complain of plagiarism. We recognize our own thunder. There is the separate taxation, there is the veto, there is the tribute, the famous Westminster question—

there you have it all." While commending the Government he insisted that they must probe "the relation of the Chartered Company to these transactions" and revise the charter, and he concluded with a weighty warning to the nation :

. . . The Government have done their part in the matter, and have done it well. Yes, but the nation has to do its part in this matter, and it will be seen by our conduct whether we do in our hearts, *ex animo*, condemn what we profess to disavow ; whether we really regret that this attempt has been made, or whether what we really deplore is that it should have failed. On the answer to that question depends the possibility of your restoring peace to the distracted races in South Africa, and on that will depend the estimation which is formed of you in the world. If the world supposes that all these are hollow pretences, and that what the English people really approve is what has been done, then you cannot complain if a severe judgment is passed upon you by the civilized world.

When a few days later Labouchere raised the question again in the form of a demand that the projected inquiry should include the financial and political activities of the Chartered Company, Harcourt again insisted that the first and material question was not what Jameson did, but by whose authority he did it. Referring to the famous letter of agonized appeal on behalf of the girls and others in the gold-reef city, to which the Raid was supposed to be a chivalrous response, Harcourt said :

. . . There was an invitation sent to Dr. Jameson to advance, signed by a certain number of persons at Johannesburg. That letter was dated, apparently, from the copy of it found on the battlefield, on December 20, ten days before Dr. Jameson advanced. Did the authorities of the South Africa Company know of that letter ? Apparently that letter was in the possession of Dr. Jameson for ten days before he started. What is the truth ? Did the authorities of the Company, with the force collecting at Mafeking, know or not know that that letter had been addressed to him ? That letter was published in *The Times* newspaper on January 1. That letter was postdated so as to make it appear that it was written on the 28th December, the day before the advance began, and the names by which it was signed were erased from the copy which was published. These facts make it most material to ask—Did Dr. Jameson show the letter to anyone connected with the South Africa

Company, and if so, what were the instructions he received upon it? . . .

While he was convinced that Rhodes and the Chartered Company were the real criminals, Harcourt now and always disbelieved that Chamberlain was involved in the Raid itself. "I have heard all the stories about the complicity of Joe in the Jameson Raid, but do not believe them," he wrote to Arnold Morley. Chamberlain, on his part, *had pledged himself to the innocence of Rhodes and his colleagues, but if he was sincere in the pledge he was soon to suffer disillusion.* On April 27 Jameson and other ringleaders were sentenced at Pretoria, and immediately after Kruger published to the world the cipher telegrams that preceded the Raid, and which showed that Rhodes and Beit together with Rutherford Harris, the secretary of the Chartered Company in Cape Town, had been the organizers of the Raid and had also stirred up a factitious rebel movement in Johannesburg to give the colour of chivalry to the enterprise. The revelation intensified feeling in the country. On the one side was all the wealth and fashion of the day, inspired by the double motive of Imperialism and gain; on the other was the remnant of the Liberal Party which, in the tide of speculation and Jingoism which was sweeping over the country, remained attached to the traditions of Cobden, Bright and Gladstone. The board of the Chartered Company contained the cream of the aristocracy, the Duke of Abercorn, the Duke of Fife, and so on, and the fashionable world, under the glamour of Rhodes, had plunged breast-high in "Charteredds," which had soared to £9 a share. It was the severest ordeal with which Harcourt had yet been faced in public life. He had fought embattled landlordism on the Budget and had won, but then he had the House of Commons behind him. Now every social interest was mobilized against him, the House of Commons was against him, and the temper of the public, which hated Kruger and loved "Dr. Jim," was against him. "The whole affair," he wrote to his wife (May 6), "is most injurious to the reputation of the country at home and

abroad, and it is impossible, if the Chartered Company is to continue to exist, that it shall be left in the hands of such men. . . It is not an agreeable task, but it must be done in the interest of public honour and morality. The language of *The Times* and the stock-jobbing Press is most disgraceful. . . . I dine with H.R.H. at Marlborough House to-night, when I suppose we shall be in the midst of the enemy." . . .

## II

There has rarely been such a scene as that which the House of Commons presented next day (May 8) when Harcourt rose to launch his indictment on the cipher telegrams. The fashionable world does not often honour the lower House with its attention, and the City ignores it ; but on this occasion the most brilliant women in society stood *en queue* to take their place in the ladies' gallery, and crowds of Stock Exchange men stood humbly below waiting for a chance to get into the crowded galleries. Two great issues were at stake, the honour of the nation and the price of Chartereds, and there could be little doubt which issue was of most moment to the brilliant throng inside and outside the House. Harcourt opened by recalling Chamberlain's assurance that the Chartered Company and Rhodes were not implicated, and then passed to the new light thrown on events by the cipher telegrams, whose authenticity was unchallenged. He proceeded :

. . . It will appear that this laudable and constitutional agitation was in fact an unlawful conspiracy, conducted and wirepulled and financed from the offices of the Chartered Company in Capetown, and under the auspices of the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony—and that its promoters were aided in that by all the resources of the De Beers Company and the Gold Fields Company of Pretoria—a conspiracy which had for its object the overthrow by an armed insurrection of the Government of a friendly State. There is something, I think, inexpressibly revolting to any high-minded man in the low morality and vulgar slang of these communications [the telegrams]. It is a squalid and a sordid picture of stock-jobbing imperialism ; you cannot say of it as the Roman Emperor said, *non olet* ; there is a noisome odour of the Stock Exchange about it. The very lingo is the language of the company promoter, and you



might think you were reading the prospectus of a set of croupiers, (Laughter and Opposition cheers). You read about a "flotation." That is the word for an armed insurrection; a "flotation" of the "new company"; the "shareholders' meeting"; the "weak partners"—that is the men who are not ready to enter on this illegal enterprise, or at least are faint-hearted about it. You have the "foreign shareholders." They are the directors of the Chartered Company. . . . And then the De Beers Company is brought upon the scene. Sir, there has been a great deal of, I think, unjust abuse heaped upon these poor-spirited Outlanders and their treachery in not supporting the Raid. The real charge against them is that they could not and would not be stimulated by bribery, and every other method, to enter upon an insurrection against the Government, which a great majority of them had no desire to overthrow. Really, sir, they are treated like the needy knife-grinders of Canning, as "*wretches whom no sense of wrong could rouse to vengeance*," and then they are denounced in the English Press and elsewhere as "*sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded, spiritless outcasts*," because they did not come up to the point of what was expected of them by the directors of the Chartered Company.

In a weighty passage he discussed the history of chartered companies, which had been described as "a valuable instrument for the cheap extension of Empire." "The fact is that these private adventurers in dominion have been very like what was used in ancient warfare—privateers. Privateering has been abolished by the consent of nations, because it has been found generally to degenerate into piracy." And so he came to his demand for the removal of the authors of the Raid:

. . . If you continue the control of the Chartered Company under the control of the men who have done these things how can you expect to make a reasonable and friendly settlement with the Government of the Transvaal and with President Kruger? If this is the treatment that he has received from those who exercise the powers of that State which calls itself his suzerain, how can you complain if he should look for support elsewhere? If he is to be attacked by his suzerain, and the people who attack him are to be continued in their authority, how can you expect to make a reasonable settlement? What chance have you of restoring peace in the Cape Colony between the two races when you continue there the very men who have caused this animosity between them?

If the English Government are about to condone a transaction of this kind, to treat it as if it were a matter of small importance, what a lesson in public morals you will read to your colonies. If

you are going to say that these are the sort of men, and that this is the sort of spirit which is treated with indifference by the House of Commons and the Government—if they are to say: “Well, after all, if we are too hard on them we shall lose money; we may suffer by it; and therefore let us condone and compound it”—if we are to tell our colonies, if we are to tell the world that the spirit by which we are actuated is only this: “Put money in thy purse,” and then call it expansion of empire and the progress of civilization (cheers), what effect is such a doctrine going to have on our Empire itself? No, sir, I do not know whether the injury which these men have done to South Africa can be repaired; but there is a great deal more than South Africa that is at stake to-day. It is the character of the British Empire throughout the world—the character of Parliament as evidenced in the spirit in which it deals with these matters, the character of the British Government which has given this authority and which has the power to revoke it or to compound the offence. . . .

What we have got to do, in my opinion, is to make it quite plain by the manner in which we deal with these transactions that we do not desire to extend Empire or gain wealth *per fas et nefas*—by fraud, falsehood and by crime; but that when we find that the authority we have given has been abused, and the trust violated, we will repudiate those acts whatever it may cost us. . . .

It was a powerful indictment, all the more impressive by its moderation of tone, but it was the speech that followed that pleased the great and distinguished company. It was quick to detect a new note in Chamberlain's reply, quick to see that after the earlier austerity towards the Raid he was coming down on “the right side,” that he was embarking on that path of Imperialism which the bizarre genius of Disraeli had blazed for him. Under all the careful phrases, there was nothing but a defence of the conspirators and threats to the Transvaal Government. Inquiry there should be, but the removal of Rhodes there should not be; he was necessary to South Africa, necessary in view of the dangerous situation in Matabeleland, necessary because he had the confidence of the white community. But he would not consider the possibility of war. To go to war to press internal reform would be “as immoral as it was unwise”:

. . . A war in South Africa would be one of the most serious wars that could possibly be waged. It would be in the nature of a civil war. It would be a long war, a bitter war, and a costly war, and

as I have pointed out already, it would leave behind the embers of a strife which I believe generations would hardly be long enough to extinguish.

He had not travelled far on the road yet, but his face was set in the direction that pleased his audience. He had taken his stand by Rhodes, and the rest would follow. The people who had engineered the Raid were left in power, and they could be trusted not to let the pistol go off at half-cock again.

While the debate was in progress, the chief person involved was in far-away Matabeleland engaged in the campaign against the Matabele tribe. He received a cable of the debate, and, enclosing it to Harcourt, wrote to him as follows :

*Rhodes to Harcourt.*

GWELO, MATABELELAND, May 13, 1896.—The enclosed explains my letter. It has come just as we start to try and make a junction with Bulawayo. We are 250 men and the Bulawayo column is 500. There are about 6,000 natives between us and Bulawayo, and we may make a mess of it.

I would be sorry to think that you thought I was "*capable but not honest*." I have tried to unite S. Africa, and no sordid motive has influenced me.

You might say why do I write, certainly not to mitigate your censure, but in case we come to grief I wish you to know that I feel that, whatever you have said you have said from a sense of public duty, and that I hope you will understand in the future that I understand the reasons of your censure, though bitter, and I am still pleased to think that you had an affection for me. But remove from your mind the idea of a sordid motive.

This letter is only written because I do not know what will happen during the next week.

C. J. RHODES.

May 14.—We start in an hour. I am minded to tear this up, but the outlook is gloomy, and I would not like you to misunderstand me. If I get through, well, tear this up ; if I do not, I think when you are sitting in that smoking-room at Rothschild's, you will be pleased to think that I understood your reasons, but I could not go out from here to an uncertainty without saying, blame me as you like but do not do the cruel thing of attributing my conduct to sordid motives. Good-bye.

You make one mistake—the Dutch in Africa are not all with Kruger, and my action was not English *v.* Dutch. But we would

not have the German element, and the Pretorian Government must go.

"The Rhodes debate came on last night," Harcourt wrote to his wife (May 8). "My speech, I think, came off all right, and was thought strong and moderate. Of course there was no real defence, and I believe that Chamberlain has made a fatal mistake in keeping Rhodes on, which he will have to acknowledge and pay for later. . . . I have two heavy speeches before me, one on education on Tuesday, and Tredegar on Wednesday, and am longing for a little rest, but I keep up pretty well."

In spite of the new tendency revealed in Chamberlain's attitude, Harcourt, whose personal regard for his old friend remained constant throughout all changes, continued in the closest intercourse with him on the subject, bringing all his influence to bear on him to adopt moderate courses. Thus when Kruger insisted on the elimination of Rhodes, he wrote :

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

MALWOOD, <sup>†</sup>LYNDHURST, *June 21, 1896.*—The demand by Kruger as to Rhodes has brought about the situation which (as you know) I have all along anticipated, and which I wish you had forestalled. It is impossible that K. could tolerate Rhodes in nominal, and in fact in substantial, command on his flank, especially when Frank Rhodes had joined his brother in publicly refusing *parole* not to repeat the attack on the Transvaal.

As long as Rhodes remains as Managing Director there can be no peace in S. Africa. He is in his own person the red flag—perhaps I should say the *black flag*.

I shall probably have to ask you the enclosed question on Monday, of which "I beg to give you private notice."

Why cannot one always be in the midst of such a scene of beauty and paradise of flowers as that in which I am now writing.

Yours sincerely,

W. V. HARCOURT.

*Enclosure.* To ask the Secretary of State for the Colonies—

(1) Whether he has communicated to the South African Company his opinion on the subject of the maintenance of Mr. Rhodes in the position of the managing director of the Company in S. Africa.

(2) When he proposes to institute the inquiry into the circumstances attending the armed attack on the Transvaal and the connection of the Company with that transaction.

Chamberlain wrote (June 22) complimenting Harcourt on his moderation, and when Rhodes was duly eliminated Harcourt sent (June 27) his hearty congratulations to the Colonial Secretary on his wisdom, adding, "I take for granted that the announcement in *The Times* that a tribunal is to be appointed by the Chancellor and the Speaker to investigate the business is a *canard*. Anything more objectionable or unconstitutional from every point of view it is impossible to imagine." He pressed Chamberlain for a House of Commons Committee, and lamented that the inquiry was delayed until the conclusion of the Jameson trial in London. "I wish with all my heart," he said plaintively (July 5), "that Africa did not exist and that there was nothing else in the world except Malwood." One of the conditions on which Harcourt insisted was that Chamberlain himself should preside over the inquiry, "in order that the responsible Ministers should take the lead in the Inquiry, and also that the resources of the Colonial Office should be at the disposal of the Committee." At first Chamberlain accepted this view, but when he decided not to preside on the ground that an "impartial chairman" was necessary, Harcourt strongly protested. Writing on July 18, he said :

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

32, ST. GEORGE'S PLACE, July 18, 1896.— . . . I had certainly understood when you wrote to me on July 4, "I am glad to say that the Cabinet have accepted your suggestion as to the proposed inquiry," that you included the condition which you admit I had insisted on as essential as to the chairmanship of the Committee, as your letter made no reservation on that point.

You must not assume that we have finally determined on the course which we ought to take in the altered circumstances of the case. We are not now in the position of accepting or refusing anything, but shall of course be prepared to consider and discuss the proposals of the Government when they are announced.

You must forgive me for saying that I am at a loss to understand why you should not regard yourself as an "impartial chairman," or why you should pay any attention to unfounded "insinuations" such as fall to the lot of all responsible Ministers in their time.

The trial of Jameson and his fellow prisoners came on on July 20, before the Lord Chief Justice (Russell), Hawkins and Pollock, and a verdict of guilty to the charges under the Foreign Enlistment Act being returned, Jameson was sentenced to fifteen months' imprisonment, and the other five prisoners to varying terms. The way was now clear for the Inquiry. Chamberlain did not want a State prosecution of Rhodes, but, though he had himself proposed a judicial inquiry, he accepted Harcourt's demand for a House of Commons Committee, and on July 30 the body was set up. It consisted of the Attorney-General (Webster), Mr. Bigham, Blake, Mr. Sydney Buxton, Campbell-Bannerman, Chamberlain, Hicks-Beach, Mr. Cripps, Hart-Dyke, John Ellis, Harcourt, W. L. Jackson, Labouchere, Wharton and George Wyndham. It did not meet until the next year, but in the preparation for its work Harcourt took an active part. Jackson had been chosen as the prospective chairman, and Harcourt negotiated the preliminaries with him during the autumn. Writing to Fowler, he said :

*Harcourt to Fowler.*

. . . The Committee will be a ticklish one to handle, but I think Jackson is a judgmatical man. I have had several letters from him asking for advice as to evidence and witnesses to be called. Chamberlain is in a very difficult position ; not because I believe there is the smallest foundation in the ridiculous stories of his privity and complicity, but because he perceives that the Rhodes regime must come so irretrievably damaged out of the Inquiry, and he does not know what to put in its place.

III

Meanwhile another cloud had assumed grave dimensions. Since the Civil War, there had been no serious breach with the United States, but at the moment when the Jameson Raid occurred an old issue suddenly imperilled our relations with that country. Ever since 1880 there had been a dispute between Great Britain and Venezuela as to the boundary between that State and British Guiana, in the colonization of which an adventurous ancestor of Harcourt's

had taken a hand nearly three hundred years before. The Venezuelans claimed a large part of the territory west of the Essequibo river which was controlled by this country, and in 1887 President Blanco demanded arbitration. The British Government was prepared to accept arbitration on a portion of the territory claimed, but not on the whole, and diplomatic relations were broken off. It was not a great matter in itself, but its reactions, as the American would say, became serious, when in December 1895, in a message to Congress, President Cleveland, who was perhaps influenced by the approaching presidential election, declared that Great Britain was taking possession "of the territory of one of our neighbouring republics," invoked the Monroe Doctrine, and announced his intention to appoint a Commission of Americans to adjust the boundary equitably between the disputants. It was a rough and drastic proceeding. Naturally the Commission set up in so provocative a spirit was ignored by the British Government, and there was imminent danger of war. The gravity of the position was aggravated by the fact that the United States was chafing under restraint. The Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of 1850 had tied its hands in the building of a ship canal in Central America, and American opinion was irritated by a long diplomatic dispute which continued until 1901, when Great Britain waived the restriction imposed by the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty and concluded the Hay-Pauncefote Agreement, which gave the United States a free hand.

The situation was one that aroused all the pacifist energies of Harcourt. No phase of his international sentiment was more acute than that which came into play in regard to Anglo-American relations. He never went to America, but his friendliness toward that country and its people was always warm and understanding, and the great episode of the "Historicus" letters had given him an appreciation of the problems of the two countries which no other living statesman on either side of the Atlantic possessed. Like Chamberlain, he had married an American wife, and he was

accustomed when writing to Chamberlain to talk of "we semi-Americans." His conception of the functions of an Opposition never interfered with his conception of the larger responsibilities of public life, and, according to his manner, he entered at once into the most cordial co-operation with the Government to avert war. His own view of the immediate dispute was expressed in a letter to James, in which, discussing the history of the boundary question, he dismissed the question of "occupation" as immaterial, said the Dutch line as it existed in 1814 was the true limit which the Agreement of 1850 established, and that any occupation by us, subsequently, of territory to which we were not entitled as successors to the Dutch was a wrongful occupation, and could give us no title. The prospect of a war with America on such a disputable subject was intolerable to him, and he brought all his weapons of persuasion and appeal to induce the Government to consent to arbitration. Writing to Lewis Harcourt, he said :

*Harcourt to his son Lewis.*

REFORM CLUB, *January 10, 1896.*—When I got to town it occurred to me to write to Joe to propose to pay him a private visit after dinner, and he asked me to come to Prince's Gardens at 11 p.m., which I did and had a 2 hour talk with him. He was friendly and frank. I pressed the American question very strongly. He professed not to believe in war, to know it would be very unpopular, but was not friendly to arbitration, which I told him was the only thing possible. He pretended there were other ways, but was not at all clear what. He talked a good deal about Transvaal—did not fear Germany. . . .

Joe looked ill and worn, and I confess I did not leave him with any satisfactory conclusion as to the U.S. subject. I shall try my hand now on Hartington. . . .

Disquieted by the attitude of Chamberlain, who deprecated a speech from the Leader of the Opposition in favour of arbitration, he proceeded to Chatsworth, where he was met by Mr. Balfour, who had delivered a pacific speech at Manchester in which he had reaffirmed an historic acceptance of the Monroe doctrine, and declared that "a war with the United States carried with it something of the unnatural



horror of a civil war." Writing to Mr. Morley of his visit to Chatsworth, Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, LYNTHURST, *January 18, 1896.*— . . . I returned yesterday from a visit to Chatsworth where I preached "conciliation of America " I think with good effect to the host [Devonshire] and to A. Balfour. The former and as I gather the majority of the Cabinet are strongly for accommodation. Balfour rather non-committal, but admitting that he knew little of the subject. I thought the Manchester speech on the whole good.

I tried to impress on both (1) the great danger of the situation ; (2) that no other proposal but arbitration could or would have any good result.

I pointed out a plan by which I thought we could get at arbitration without discredit.

The man whose obstinacy I most fear is Joe.

I find that Carnegie had written to the Duke, and said that we were " playing with fire " over the Nicaraguan affair. Do you remember our remonstrance against that *coup de main*, which all but brought us a similar crisis. . . .

Fortunately private negotiations between the Government and Olney, the United States Foreign Minister, had now been established, and Harcourt was urgent that we must not be stiff about the limitations of arbitration. We must not exclude territory now settled. " I do not believe," he wrote to Fowler (January 23), who had made an excellent speech on the question of arbitration, " that the U.S. will agree to this. If we are to go to arbitration there is no use fighting small points. I am for arbitration *pur et simple sans phrase*." He was conscious of the feeling in America, and of the dangers there. " Cabot Lodge," he wrote to his son, " seems to have overshot the mark in the *ultra*-Monroe resolution in the Senate." But the fact that there were war-mongers there as well as here only made him the more emphatic in his insistence on arbitration without restriction, and on the avoidance of imperilling the situation by haggling over small points. This view he carried further than his own colleagues on the Opposition bench. Thus he was prepared to recognize the United States Com-

mission on Venezuela. Writing to him (January 25), Mr Morley said :

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

95, ELM PARK GARDENS, *January 25*.—As I feared when I last wrote to you, things are not looking so rosy in the U.S., and Smalley [the Washington Correspondent of *The Times*] this morning evidently sees lions in the path.

It is thought here that the American syndicate who get concessions for gold from Venezuela in territory long in our occupation, have intervened, and are bullying the U.S. Government.

I agree with you about the Westlake proposal. Neither bare occupancy by us, nor non-occupancy by Venezuela, can give us more than our rights or title by succession. What our successory title is—that is the question.

On the question of our Government sending information as the U.S. Commission request, Fowler and Asquith dined here two nights ago. F. said we ought to comply : A. said No, and so do I. What do you say ? . . .

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, *January 26*.—I am so anxious about the U.S. business that I should not stand out on any point that would tend to settle it. We made a fatal mistake in refusing the arbitration [with Venezuela], and it is our business to repair it. No *punctilio* ought to be allowed to stand in the way of peace. If we are going to publish our case what is the use of saying to the U.S., " We publish it, but *not to you*." I vote with Fowler.

My view is this : We have no diplomatic relations with Venezuela nor in their present temper are they likely to renew them. The U.S. inform themselves of the facts through their Commission, and will publish them. We set out our view of the facts. They will conflict. We agree to refer them to arbitration. The U.S. should be confidentially apprised beforehand of our willingness to do this.

I have very little doubt that there are plenty of malign influences at work in U.S. to promote war. That is all the more reason why we should not halt or stumble on the road to peace. . . .

In this case it can hardly be doubted to-day that Harcourt took the sounder view of the matter, and in the end the Government adopted that view. Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were no longer in communication, and their opinions on this critical question were exchanged through third parties. Thus, Mr. Asquith, writing on the eve of the

meeting of Parliament to Harcourt after a visit to Lord Rosebery at Mentmore, said :

*Mr. Asquith to Harcourt.*

I. PAPER BUILDINGS, TEMPLE, February 10.— . . . In the meantime he [Lord Rosebery] and others think that it is very important to avoid saying anything that can stiffen the backs of the American jingoes—as e.g. anything that would seem to admit that a case had actually arisen in Venezuela affecting the interests of the U.S. and so coming within the Monroe doctrine ; or anything that would exclude the question of the character and extent of the actual occupation on both sides from the proposed arbitration.

I mention this in case there may be one or two sentences in what you are proposing to say that might be modified accordingly.

Next day, replying on the Address, Harcourt made a bold and unequivocal appeal for arbitration :

. . . We have no desire whatever (he said) to assert any claim to territory to which we are not clearly entitled. The question is, what is that territory ? That that is a doubtful question who can deny ? The diplomacy of fifty years, the correspondence, the agreements, the conflicting claims, the multitudinous lines at various times drawn and withdrawn by both sides, the different maps—all that demonstrates that this is a most doubtful question, on which I observe that people who are most ignorant are pronouncing with the greatest confidence. . . . Diplomacy has had this matter in hand for half a century, and a mighty bad hand it has made of it. . . . But if it should appear on inquiry that the differences of opinion are not capable of solution in this way, why, then, what objection can there be to referring that difference to the arbitration of a third Power ?

Harcourt's speech created an excellent impression among the peace section in the United States, where a large element of the Press, influenced no doubt by the election fever and the need of conciliating the Irish-American vote, was carrying on a violent crusade against English " aggression." But the progress of negotiations hung fire, and on the eve of the Easter recess Harcourt wrote to Mr. Balfour, Devonshire and Chamberlain, that in view of the alarmist statements of Smalley in *The Times*, he could no longer maintain silence in the House unless he could be reassured on the subject. Mr. Balfour urged him not to raise questions in the House

which he would be unable to answer, but assured him that negotiations were still in progress. Harcourt was not satisfied, and writing to Mr. Balfour explained at length his view of the seriousness of the situation. He concluded :

*Harcourt to Mr. Balfour.*

32, ST. GEORGE'S ROAD, April 24, 1896.— . . . The time seems to me to have come when I should not be justified in keeping silence any longer, and I think the public mind ought to be reassured by a statement on the part of the Government as to the actual situation in order to satisfy them that measures are being taken to secure at once *an arbitration on the Venezuela boundary*, which is a thing I am convinced is the only course which can result in a peaceful settlement and which is desired by the great majority of people both inside and outside the House of Commons. I have therefore put upon the paper a question to which I hope you will be able to give a satisfactory reply on Monday.

To this question, Mr. Balfour gave the reply that negotiations were still in progress ; but the matter lingered on during the summer without decisive action, Harcourt still pressing Ministers privately for the acceptance of the Olney proposals. By August there was an approximation to agreement and on the day of the prorogation of Parliament (August 14) the following arranged answer was made to Harcourt by Mr. Balfour :

The latest proposals of Mr. Olney are still under consideration by the Government and are regarded by them as opening a way to an equitable settlement. The Government have every expectation that the pending negotiations will lead to an early and satisfactory result.

Writing to Mr. Morley (August 16), Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

. . . I got what I conceived perfectly satisfactory assurances from Pauncefoot on Venezuela. He considered himself instructed to accept the Olney proviso as to settled districts, which he considered would conclude the matter.

At the rising of the African Committee Joe said to me *avec intention*, "I am going to America on the 26th and shall see Olney. I shall be peaceable." I hope that may be true, but *je m'en doute*. He has been throughout the Spanish fly in the pot of ointment. I learned from Pauncefoot that he was much annoyed that he (P.)

had seen me <sup>1</sup> before he had interviewed him (C.). So like his petty jealousy—a vice which is the bane of public as well as private life. . . .

The question and answer in the House of Commons brought Harcourt a letter from Henry White, who had been on a special embassy to England, and who was then at Newport, Rhode Island. He said that Olney had heard nothing to indicate a nearer approach to an understanding ; but he (White) thought that the incident in the House meant that Harcourt had received from Mr. Balfour more private and definite explanations than had been thought wise to make public. Harcourt replied :

*Harcourt to Hon. Henry White.*

WIESBADEN, September 6, 1896.— . . . I made it quite clear to the Government that unless I received satisfactory assurances that the "settled districts" question would be immediately settled *substantially on the footing of Olney's despatch of June 12th* (i.e. by acceptance of the proviso that the settled districts and their equities should be left to the decision of the arbitrators) I should bring on a discussion in the House of Commons. I waited to see Pauncefote, who arrived shortly before the prorogation, and I had several conferences with Balfour and Pauncefote. The latter is extremely reasonable and anxious for a settlement on the basis you and I

<sup>1</sup> It is to this interview, I assume, that the following memorandum of the late Lord Harcourt refers :

In the spring and summer of 1896 W. V. H. was greatly concerned at the dangers which he foresaw between Great Britain and the United States over the Venezuelan question. He constantly pressed for a definite agreement to submit the dispute to arbitration.

He was then living at his sister-in-law's house, 32, St. George's Road, Eccleston Square, and one day Sir J. Pauncefote, the British Minister to U.S.A., arrived there to see him, saying, "I have come to see you, Sir William, about Venezuela." W. V. H. interrupted him saying, "Do you think that is wise? My attitude on the subject is well known, and if you come to me it may embarrass you in your communications with the Prime Minister (Lord Salisbury)."

Pauncefote replied, "Sir William, I come to you with Lord Salisbury's knowledge and at his suggestion in order that you shall suggest the terms in which the decision shall be announced to refer the Venezuelan difficulty to arbitration."

W. V. H. said to his son, who was present, "Sit down and write this," and proceeded to dictate a form of words which, after some slight corrections, was taken away by Pauncefote to Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office.

desire. And I finally received assurances which to me were quite satisfactory, and Pauncefote informed me that he had received instructions which he had no doubt would lead at once to a final and conclusive arrangement. I hope by this time he has returned to Washington, and that everything is *en train* as we should desire. On receiving their assurances Balfour and I agreed upon the question and answer as reported, which was thought to be more discreet than the chances of debate, when it is always more difficult for a Government to yield to an Opposition. I have no doubt that there will be a desire to get some concession which may make it easier for Salisbury to withdraw from the position he had taken up. And I hope you will use your influence with Olney to smooth the way to climbing down—now that the substance is conceded. I am sure that Pauncefote is as convinced as I am of the reasonableness of Olney's proposal and will do all he can to put it through.

Chamberlain is by this time in the U.S., and he told me he should see Olney but that he should be "very peaceable." I hope he may be as good as his word. I shall be very glad if you will let me know what passes between Olney, Pauncefote and Chamberlain, and if the thing still sticks I will give it another shove. . . .

White sent Harcourt favourable accounts of Chamberlain's attitude in America, and by October all tension was removed. Writing to Chamberlain on his return, Harcourt said, in the course of a letter mainly dealing with the approaching Raid inquiry :

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, November 17, 1896.—I am glad to hear from those who have seen you that you have returned from the U.S. in a high state of preservation. We semi-Americans have much reason to rejoice over the defeat of Bryan, and your "sound money" democrat wife and my republican wife may embrace one another like Mercy and Truth. It is not however satisfactory to think that such a programme should have collected so many votes.

I congratulate you on the satisfactory conclusion of the Venezuela business, and am not disposed to criticize too narrowly (which from a party point of view would not be difficult) the difference between Salisbury in November 1895 and 1896. As you know I have been too anxious for a settlement to carp at the methods by which it has been reached. I know from my American informants how much you personally contributed to the satisfactory solution. I expect the fifty years will really give the old Schomberg line, which I have always thought was the natural settlement, as I expect there will be little found westward of that line.

I was very glad to see that you trampled on that absurd scare about the ruin of our trade by German competition. I had last

August obtained a good deal of information from Giffen which I had intended to use, but your statement *ex cathedra* is ~~conclusive~~. The catchpenny bosh "made in Germany" is all bosh, as I learned this autumn from our Consul at Frankfort.

At last our sagacious friends, H. Chaplin and H. Vincent, seem likely to attain the great panacea of dear food, but I do not find that the consumers are delighted with an increase of 50 per cent. on the quartern loaf. . . .

When in the Queen's Speech in the following January the Government were not only able to announce the settlement of the Venezuelan difficulty, but the conclusion of a general treaty of arbitration with the United States, Harcourt congratulated the Government on the conclusion of a difference fraught with danger to the English-speaking peoples. He said that the Opposition had done nothing to hinder the Government in finding a peaceful solution—a claim which Mr. Balfour handsomely acknowledged—and paid a deserved tribute to Pauncefoot for his labours in the cause of peace. "Good words from such a quarter," wrote Pauncefoot from Washington (February 16, 1897), "make a lasting impression on the public mind, and can never be forgotten by me."

#### IV

Before turning to the issue which led up to the resignation of Lord Rosebery, it may be well to glance briefly at the general activities of the Session and Harcourt's part in them. The principal measures of the Government were the Forster Education Bill and Mr. Chaplin's Agricultural Rating Bill. Both measures were regarded by the Liberals as bribes to the factional interests of the Conservatives, the main purpose of the one being the further relief of the voluntary schools and the "unification" of education, which aimed at the subversion of the school-board system, and the purpose of the other being the relief of the agricultural interest at the expense of the urban tax-payer. Harcourt in a speech at Bournemouth (March 11) said that if it was now intended to upset the education settlement of 1870 the Liberal Party would fight to the death. Since

1870 the Government contribution to the voluntary schools had risen from thirty-eight to seventy-four per cent., and if further assistance was to be given to them the principle of representation in the management must be introduced. At Tredegar on May 13 he developed his theme, and denounced the ecclesiastical motive behind the scheme. For twenty-five years, he said, the schools of the country had been free from the *odium theologicum*. All these theological hatreds came soon enough. Why anticipate them by a day? The opposition he led to the measure in the House was so formidable that by the middle of June the Bill was on the rocks, and Harcourt was writing daily to his wife of the brave doings in the House where they were harpooning the "stranded whale." "The Lord hath delivered them into our hands," he said (June 16), "I have never known a Government so soon and so completely discredited. The chariot wheel will drag heavily, and the horse and his rider will be cast into the sea." "We are doing splendidly," was the report two days later. "No one who does not see it can form an idea of the prostration of the Unionists. The anger and disgust of the Party with the Government is growing so strong that I greatly fear that they may even yet be drawn into an autumn Session, or a protracted sitting to pass the Bill." But the fear was groundless. The Bill had few friends even among the faction it was intended to placate, and it was jettisoned. The first attempt to disestablish the school boards and to undo the work of 1870 had failed ignominiously.

But while the Education Bill was, in Harcourt's phrase, "buried in the bog of Hansard," the Agricultural Rating Bill, popularly called the Rent Relief Bill, survived. The purpose of the Bill was to relieve the rates on agricultural land to the extent of £1,500,000 out of the Exchequer. Land was to be assessed on half its rateable value, while houses and buildings would continue to be rated on the whole of their rateable value. Harcourt denounced the scheme as having "its origin in the same spirit as inspired



the Corn Laws." It pretended to be a relief for the tenant, but its real purpose was to provide a dole for the landowner. In an address at Newport on May 15 he asked, "Why does not the land of the ground-landlords contribute? When this cry of injustice to land is set up I sometimes think how foolish these landlords are in raising questions which, when they come to be solved, will have a solution which will not be agreeable or advantageous to themselves." The Bill was fought with great intensity in Committee, and Harcourt assailed it not only in Parliament, but in the Press. On the report stage (June 24) he declared that the Bill used public money as a gift to the owners of land under the pretext that it was for the relief of the tenants, and on the third reading he produced with crushing effect a circular addressed by a Welsh landowner to his tenants stating that the Bill would amount to the same thing as the landlord's reduction of eight per cent. of the rent. "I am happy," he said, referring to the now defunct Education Bill, "that it should receive Christian burial"—but this Bill had no euthanasia. "It will have a wider circulation in the demand notes of the rate-collectors." No measure passed in our time created such deep resentment in the public mind as this daring raid on the public purse in the interests of a class, and the anger was deepened by the action of Mr. Chaplin and Mr. Balfour, who, unable to meet the overwhelming tide of criticism, forced it through the House with the closure. "There is something indecent," said the *Saturday Review*, "in the frantic hurry with which a party votes public money in relief of the pockets of its own supporters."

A domestic storm arose in the Liberal household during the Session in regard to the relations of the National Liberal Federation and the Liberal Central Office, that is, the Whips' office. Since the establishment of the "Caucus" by Chamberlain there had always been a certain suspicion on the part of some of the Liberal leaders in Parliament of the democratic body outside. It had been one of Hartington's chief grievances against Chamberlain that he had organized

an outside power with which to dominate the parliamentary situation. In the matter of policy there were two kings in the field.\* The Federation propounded programmes in the country, and the Liberal leaders had either to accept them or seem to fall foul of their organized supporters. With the disruption of the Party after the introduction of Home Rule, especially the unhappy experience of the Newcastle programme and the incident of the leadership, the relations of the Whips' office and the Federation became strained. Hitherto they had worked under one roof, but the Federation now proposed to work in a separate building, and through a separate staff. At a meeting at Huddersfield in March the Federation had passed a resolution in support of Lord Rosebery, who, however, defended the union of the two bodies under a single secretary. When later in the year, after Lord Rosebery had resigned the leadership of the Party, a request was made to Harcourt by the Federation to address the annual meeting, Harcourt, who feared that the Federation might commit the Front Bench to another Newcastle programme, was indisposed to accept. Writing to Mr. Morley with reference to the request of Mr. (Sir) R. A. Hudson, the Secretary of the Federation, he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

*November 16.*— . . . He is unable to state what is the programme to which the Federation is about to pledge itself, nor can he state in what relation the Federation and the Front Bench are to regard one another.

This is a point which you will remember we have more than once discussed in connection with the Maden correspondence in the spring and the demand for the separation of the Whips' office and the Federation.

The Federation claim to be independent of Parliament, and we profess to be independent of them.

The situation has always seemed to me absurd, that we should leave the Federation to formulate a creed and then go down (as at Newcastle) to swear to all its articles. Either the Front Bench are to influence their policy which they disavow, or we are to conform to all that they do.

In the present juncture it seems to me not at all expedient that we should ventilate on our responsibility an "authorized

programme." But if we go to bless them we shall necessarily appear to endorse what they may think fit to proclaim. .

Mr. Morley, after consulting Mr. Asquith, wrote urging Harcourt to accept on the ground that they could not let the Federation die, and that if the leading men dropped away, "the hot-heads and the geese" would run away with it and discredit the Party with the public. He was against repeating "the performance of Mr. G. at Newcastle," but it was perfectly possible for Harcourt "to take up the position that their resolutions, programmes, etc., were interesting and important indications of the aims and objects that such a representative body thought desirable, but of course their order, and the proper moment for pushing them into the line of parliamentary or legislative action, depended on circumstances and they could not look to you now either to make this choice or to promise direct adhesion to every item." Harcourt replied :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, November 20, 1896.—As you have converted Asquith I suppose I shall have to go *multum reluctante*.

Meanwhile it is such delicious weather for autumn planting that I think of nothing else.

Balfour seems to have made a moderately sensible speech at Sheffield and to have discovered that exports are paid for by imports, and that it is a good thing for your customers to be well off—which is really satisfactory in a bimetallist. I am collecting some materials to explode the "made in Germany" scare which is of all nonsenses the most nonsensical.

His "autumn planting" was mixed with other activities besides the collection of trade statistics. He was at the same time carrying on a voluminous correspondence with Mr. Morley on the subject of Irish taxation. The report of the Childers Commission on Irish Financial Relations had revealed a gross excess of taxation in the case of Ireland, showed that identical rates of taxation did not mean equality of burden, and that the actual tax revenue of Ireland was one-eleventh of that of Great Britain, whereas it ought to be one-twentieth, and insisted that for the purpose of taxation Great Britain and Ireland should be treated as separate

entities. Harcourt, who fully endorsed the report and insisted that the subject ought to be dealt with on its merits apart from Home Rule, furnished Mr. Morley, who was conducting the controversy in public, with ammunition from his abundant historical and statistical resources. His general conclusion was "that there is and always has been a *continuing right to revision* of the terms according to the circumstances of Ireland," "that the pledge of the Union has been consistently violated and that financially all the benefit has gone to the richer and the disadvantage to the poorer country," and "that at present they (the Irish) are overtaxed to the amount of £2,000,000." In showing that equality of taxation did not necessarily involve equality of burden, he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

December 19, 1896.— . . . The only plausible ground which can be taken is the excess expenditure in Ireland. But though the taxation was expressed in the Treaty of Union as governed by taxable capacity and provision made for "exceptions and abatements" there was nothing said about proportion of expenditure. The case is something like this. A man who lives at the rate of £5,000 per ann. invites a friend to come to live with him as a companion and makes him free of his house, but the friend says, "I have only £300 per ann. which I can pay you for my keep." Presently the first gentleman increases his expenditure to £10,000 per ann. He says to his friend, "You get the benefit of my more costly expenditure. When I drink champagne you drink it too. I give you electric light, more carriages, more servants, more everything, you ought to pay me £600 per ann." The poor man replies, "I cannot afford more than £300. I am not richer than I was before. The increase of expenditure is your doing not mine. I have had nothing to say to the management."

The question was much debated in the country at the beginning of 1897, but it did not come before Parliament until the following year.

v

The controversies of public life never embittered Harcourt's private friendships, and though the Session had been sternly fought it was marked by many friendly incidents in the relations of Harcourt and his opponents. He was

peculiarly sensible of the loyalty and respect with which Hicks-Beach had preserved the principles of the great Budget of 1894 in his own financial arrangements, and in a speech at Holloway (July 7) he prefaced an attack on the proceedings of Mr. Balfour with the following compliment :

... We respect Mr. Balfour's ability, and we appreciate and reciprocate his courtesy, and it will be an ill day for the House of Commons when those engaged in the honourable contests of parliamentary conflict are incapable of mutual regard and that delight

"In the stern joy that warriors feel

In foemen worthy of their steel."

His merciless handling of Mr. Chaplin during the passage of the Agricultural Rating Act did not interrupt his jovial relations with his rival heavy-weight with whom, as the Journal shows, he kept up a comparison of magnitudes. Mr. Chaplin about this time succeeded in bringing down his weight from eighteen stones to sixteen—and Harcourt, who had always prided himself on being a stone lighter than his rival, went into training, gave up milk, sugar, bread and other fattening foods, and brought his own weight down substantially. Finally the two agreed to a "compromise" by which they were each to remain as near sixteen and a half stones as possible, and ignore the caricaturists, who, as Mr. Chaplin complained, always made him appear the fatter no matter what weight he took off.

His oldest surviving friendship, that with James, remained unbroken, and writing to him at the end of the year James said :

... It has not been an eventful year to me, but it has to you. Your leadership of Opposition has done more for your reputation than any other period of your life. I shall say somewhere that you fought your battles of 1896 just as Napoleon conducted the campaign of 1814—outnumbered and unassisted—the most brilliant display of generalship. I shall not work out the simile—lest Longwood and Malwood should get mixed—but before that retreat is sought you will have a long 100 days. . . .

"There is nothing in the world like old friends and old wine, and you are my choicest bin," replied Harcourt. "You are very kind in all you say about last Session and my part

in it, but it was the bitter bad bowling that enabled one to score."

Another friendship, no less cherished, had ended with death during the year. Writing to his son (June 16) he said :

. . . I had a letter from Everett Millais yesterday asking me to go to see his poor father [J. E. Millais] who had expressed a wish to see me. I went at 6 p.m. Lady M. saw me first and was deeply moved. She begged me not to seem too shocked or depressed at the sight of him. I found the poor dear fellow (once so strong and gay) propped up in his chair with white beard and moustache, quite unable to utter. He kissed my hands over and over again, and wrote on a slate that "I was the friend he loved best, and he followed in the paper my gallant fighting." He also wrote sending his love to you. I spoke to him cheerfully about old times which pleased him, though he cried a good deal. It was terribly painful, but I am glad I went, and shall go again.

With Gladstone he continued in occasional correspondence, and no events in the domestic life of the Queen failed to evoke from him a letter of congratulation or condolence. Replying to his congratulations on the achievements of the longest reign in history, the Queen wrote :

*Queen Victoria to Harcourt.*

BALMORAL, *October 2.*— . . . Alas ! within the last nine years and a half the Queen has had great sorrows. She has lost three dearly beloved sons-in-law and a dear grandson, all in the prime of life—besides very many kind devoted friends who were with her in '87. It is, however, a source of great pleasure to the Queen to have her beloved granddaughter the Empress of Russia—more lovely than ever, and as simple and unaffected as she was before, as well as her charming husband, who is equally nice. He is most amiable, and of a singularly open and straightforward character. . . .

## CHAPTER XXI

### LORD ROSEBERY'S RESIGNATION

The Armenian infamy—Advance on the Nile—British responsibilities under the Cyprus Convention—Harcourt at Ebbw Vale—Gladstone intervenes—Lord Rosebery's letter of resignation—Harcourt declines to be drawn into leadership discussions—*De jure* leader a question for the future.

MEANWHILE the volcano that raged within the Liberal Party had burst once more into violent eruption. On October 8 the country was startled by the publication of a letter addressed by Lord Rosebery to T. E. Ellis, the Chief Whip of the Liberals, announcing that "the leadership of the Party, so far as I am concerned, is vacant and that I resume my liberty of action." The letter followed upon the speech of Gladstone at Liverpool on the Armenian massacres, and was directly related to that incident. It is probable that Armenia and the Gladstone speech were the occasion rather than the cause of the resignation. Gladstone's moral authority in the country was still unrivalled, and the rank and file of the Party accepted any utterance from him with a reverence that was conceded to no other public man. But he had now ceased to play an active part in affairs. He was in his eighty-seventh year, his parliamentary career was done, and the speech at Liverpool proved in fact to be the last occasion on which his voice was heard in public. So far as the active leaders of the Party were concerned, there was no such disagreement between them and Lord Rosebery on the subject of Armenia as justified the resignation. The question was one of extreme difficulty and perplexity, and, profound as was the sense of horror awakened by the

massacres, it is impossible to discover in any quarter a clear line of attack on the Government policy which created a sharp and decisive cleavage within the Liberal ranks.

The Armenian situation had, it is true, grown desperately worse. The Sultan, encouraged as usual by the dissensions and jealousies among the Great Powers, had given unprecedented license to the forces of terrorism. The massacres in the province of Sasun in the late summer of 1894 were followed by vain protests from the Powers, and on the last day of September 1895 an Armenian demonstration in Constantinople was made the excuse of further massacres, the hideous record culminating in the November massacre in the province of Van, described by Lord Salisbury himself as comparable only to the slaughter under Tamerlane and Ghenghiz Khan. Public opinion was deeply moved by this succession of infamies, and it was urged that the British Government was bound to take all steps, even at the risk of war, to protect the Christian population of Asia Minor. Salisbury, however, denied that Great Britain was pledged to war. All that was provided by the Berlin Treaty was that the Powers agreed that if the Sultan promulgated certain reforms they should watch over their execution. Nor did the Cyprus Convention involve the physical interference of Great Britain for the protection of the Christians of Asia Minor. Harcourt, in the debate on the Address, attributed the immunity of the Sultan to the fatal interference with the Treaty of San Stefano, and to the traditional hostility to Russia, but he was no more disposed than the Government to plunge into war, and was privately alarmed at the attitude of Bryce, who was in favour of independent action, with the permission of Russia and France.

The question of dealing with Turkey in regard to the atrocities became complicated at this time by the decision of the Government to advance up the Nile Valley to Dongola to check the growing power of the Mahdi. Harcourt resisted this new phase of the eternal problem of Egypt. He reminded the House that a convention had been drawn



up by the former Salisbury Government which would have arranged for the evacuation of Egypt six years before. "The policy of H.M.'s Government means," he said, "that we are entering on a long and uncertain future. We are lifting up our anchor on a perilous shore, not knowing where we are going to drift." And speaking at the National Liberal Club on May 5, he said :

. . . I am a little suspicious of these ideal wars. The ideals come from our idealist Colonial Secretary. His ideal is the conquest of the Sudan. Are they going to conquer the Sudan ? Not at all. "We are going as far as we can, limited by the resistance we shall meet." What a policy for a great country ! Why that is the spirit of Bob Acres or of Sir Andrew Aguecheek. You remember what Sir Andrew Aguecheek said when the duel was about to come off ? He said, "Plague on't ; an I thought he had been valiant, and so cunning in fence, I'd have seen him hanged ere I'd have challenged him. Let him let the matter slip, and I'll give him my horse, gray Capilet."

With this new enterprise to engage public attention, the question of Armenia subsided, but it blazed up again as the result of a terrible massacre in Constantinople under the eyes of the European ambassadors, and of a new outbreak of outrage in Anatolia. The public indignation at the continuance of the iniquities and at the helplessness of the Government in their presence was strongly expressed by Mr. Asquith, who proposed to suspend diplomatic relations with Turkey ; but Lord Rosebery's speeches and letters failed to satisfy the demands of the Party, and one of his most powerful supporters in the Press, the *Daily Chronicle*, turned on him as the "veiled prophet." "I suppose you see the *Daily Chronicle*," wrote Harcourt to Lewis Harcourt. "Their rage with Rosebery is amusing. Asquith's proposal to suspend diplomatic relations is idle. It would leave the other Powers in sole command of Constantinople which is what the English people most abhor. It is not *Europe* that is impotent : it is only England, because we have set all Europe against us by our Jingoism and 'Big Englandism,' and all the Powers continue with satisfaction to snub us. This is the text on which I shall

preach when I speak." "It is no use shouting with the mob against the Sultan," he wrote later (September 17). "In a few months the same mob will be shouting for him and against Russia." He kept silence in public until October 5, when he addressed his constituents at Ebbw Vale. He recalled the past history of the Turkish question, and traced the misfortunes to our jealousy of Russia :

. . . Let us by all means strengthen the Government. But are we ready to strengthen them in the only policy that can really avail, and that is to come to an understanding with Russia on the Eastern question ? And when I say the Eastern question, I mean the whole Eastern question—to come to an understanding with Russia as a friend, and not as an enemy, as an Asiatic neighbour, and not as an Asiatic foe ? The first step in that direction would be to obliterate the Cyprus Convention, which is nothing else but a standing menace, a declaration of hostility and exclusion against Russia in the interest of Turkey. A formal denunciation of that instrument would be a signal repudiation before the world of our complicity in and our toleration of the crimes of Turkey. . . .

Referring to Salisbury's declaration in the previous November that the Concert of Europe was complete and effectual, and the evidences since of its breakdown in the presence of the Armenian horrors, he dealt with the causes that underlay the hostility with which this country was regarded by foreign Powers :

. . . We desire the extension of our Empire, and we are much too apt to treat the same desire in other great States as if it were in fact an injury to ourselves ; and thus all over the world one Jingo defies another, and the patriotic cock crows its challenge to its fellows. . . . That is the history of these unnatural, these unnecessary international suspicions, jealousies and dislikes.

Formal alliances were apt to break down under pressure, he explained, but what we needed was what used to be called an *entente cordiale*, a readiness for accommodation and amiability :

. . . We go (he said) through a succession of international scares, suspicions and dislikes. I have lived through a great many of them. They were all very senseless, very baseless and very mischievous. They have left the scars of international distrust and international hatred behind them. In the 'sixties France had great successes ;

we alarmed ourselves at once that she was meditating an invasion of England; in the 'seventies Germany was in the ascendant; then none of us could sleep at night for fear of the Battle of Dorking. As long as I can remember we nursed the belief that the whole object of Russia was to possess herself of Hindustan. But if we approach the Great Powers in that spirit it is not likely that we shall make much of the Concert of Europe. . . .

If we want to strengthen the hands of the Government let us give them an assurance that in cultivating the friendship of other Powers they will have the cordial and steadfast support of national sentiment. The first and practical measure for this purpose will be, in the first place, to divest ourselves of the protectorate of Turkey, in which we have been the leading actors in Europe; secondly, to disclaim hostility to Russia, which we have hitherto made the keystone of our Eastern policy. . . . The old policy has brought us no honour. It has landed us to-day in a great shame. It would be a new policy, but it is one which would deliver England from a reproach which has so long attached to her of being, for selfish, and, I believe, for mistaken ends, the prop, the mainstay, and the sponsor of a Power which is the scandal of Europe and the scourge of Asia. . . .

In all this there was no disposition to force the hand of the Government. Harcourt, like Lord Rosebery himself, was not prepared to urge action which might land Europe in war. But on September 24 Gladstone intervened with the address at Liverpool on the infamy of the Turk. He urged independent action on the part of England, and denied that it would involve a European war. Under the Anglo-Turkish Convention of 1878 we undoubtedly had the right to threaten Turkey with coercion in the absence of decent government in Asia Minor. We could withdraw our countenance by recalling our Ambassador, and he insisted that we should make our protest, even if we had to recede before the possible threat of European war.

The speech had a sensational sequel. On October 8 Lord Rosebery wrote the letter to the Chief Whip of the Party announcing his resignation of the leadership on the ground that he found himself "in apparent difference with a considerable mass of the Liberal Party on the Eastern question, and in some conflict with Mr. Gladstone himself." The next day he spoke at Edinburgh, and, while denouncing the atrocities which had for two years been committed in

Asia Minor "while the Powers look on and fly little diplomatic kites," he declared absolutely against single-handed intervention. "A European war," he said, "would be a scene of universal carnage and ruin, preceded or accompanied by the extermination of the Armenians." But that his resignation had a wider meaning than disagreement on the Turkish question—which did not apply to the Cabinet—he took pains to make clear. Speaking on the personal difficulties of his position, he said :

. . . Well, a man in that position [that of a peer Prime Minister] has no chance of succeeding in the leadership of the Liberal Party unless he receive very exceptional support, very exceptional loyalty, and very exceptional co-operation from the Party inside and outside Parliament to make up for his own inherent deficiencies. Perhaps I had no right to expect any such exceptional measure to be dealt out to me, but, at any rate, I cannot say that I received it—rather was my being a peer, which was to some extent the reason, as I have explained, of my impotence, urged as a reason for further hampering my efforts.

And he proceeded to instance as proofs of his grievances that his Government was defeated two days after the meeting of Parliament, and the failure to adopt the policy of concentration at the General Election as he had wished. Gladstone had unconsciously been the last straw to an accumulating burden of complaint. It was singular that Lord Rosebery should have selected the defeat on the Address as one of the grounds of dissatisfaction, inasmuch as at the time of that defeat he had himself taken the general view that it was a retaliation on him by the disaffected elements, which had been irritated by his "pre-dominant partner" speech on the previous day.

## II

The resignation created unparalleled ferment. It was wholly unexpected and in the moment chosen not very intelligible. Harcourt himself assumed an attitude of detachment from the rumpus. Writing to the Lord Chief Justice (Russell), he said (October 13) :

... You find us here in the midst of a very unintelligible perturbation owing to Rosebery's resignation, the cause and object of which I am wholly at a loss to understand. I hate all rows and most of all personal rows and keep myself snug in my garden, which is a much more enjoyable occupation than politics. I always think what a wise man Reynolds was who—

"When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios and stuff  
He shifted his trumpet and only took snuff."

I should like a pinch out of your box.

In a letter to Mr. Morley dealing with Irish finance he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, October 26, 1896.—I have been sitting in the safe retreat of Malwood contemplating with equanimity what is called a "crisis." For my part I really do not see what is changed except that "there is a Liberal the less."

Of course the reasons given by Rosebery for bolting are not the true ones. It was neither Mr. G. nor our humble selves his colleagues. I believe he funk'd the future which he saw before him—that he felt called upon to say something on politics in general and give a lead, and that he did not know what to say and so took up his hat and departed.

What I think we have to complain of is that he has deliberately led the public to believe that we—and I especially—refused to consult with him when as he knows and we know the refusal came from him and was persisted in against our remonstrances. That being so we had to do without him—and we did pretty well. This will have to be known one day, and I am waiting for the proper moment to let it be known. When the public see his letter to Spencer of last August they will be a little surprised.

In the meanwhile I have thought it best to sit still and to disregard all the *cancans* of the Press—barring forged letters.<sup>1</sup>

One advantage of the situation is that I feel altogether absolved from speechification. I have happily discharged my double barrel to my constituents, which is all that is obligatory. I suspect Rosebery must have been surprised—perhaps disgusted—that he could find nothing in what I said on Armenia from which he could dissent.

You will see that the old grievance about "concentration" is revived. What does this gospel mean? Is it intended that we are to declare that everything except the House of Lords is thrown over. If that is the intention it is one in which I think none of us have ever concurred. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Harcourt had just been made the victim of some forged letters in the Press.

In the course of a reply to this letter, Mr. Morley remarked (October 29) :

I went to Paris a week ago. On my first morning I walked into a bookshop, and lo, who should be there but Rosebery himself ! ! We sauntered away together, and gossiped about everything but his own proceedings—books, history, some of the *péripéties* of Home Rule in '86. He knows how I feel about it—and nothing was to be gained for either of us by spoiling the first morning of holiday. So we went to the Conciergerie, and saw the dungeon of Marie Antoinette and the Girondins. I fancy he left Paris for home on Monday. Of the political future not a word. . . .

I envy you for having shot your bolt. I have now to go to my constituents and to Glasgow. It will not be an easy task for me. It would be easy enough, if one could permit oneself to follow Rosebery's shocking example and hold up colleagues to the public censure. If his letter of last August were known, it would put a very different complexion on things. . . .

Meanwhile the rupture and its consequences filled the Press and the public places with agitated discussion. The Radical view of the position was expressed by the *Star*, which said : " Lord Rosebery has resigned, and Sir William Harcourt reigns in his stead. We say reigns, for he has ruled during the whole duration of Lord Rosebery's titular sovereignty. Lord Rosebery's decision only regularizes the situation." There was an immediate movement among the Liberals in the House of Commons who had been hurt at Lord Rosebery's choice as leader to demonstrate in favour of Harcourt, and Labouchere, as usual, took the lead. Harcourt dissented. " As to your reply to Labby," he wrote to his son, " I think that it is somewhat too snubby. If you want to manage people you must pretend to believe in them whether you do or not." But he would have no absurdity like a House of Commons resolution. From the rank and file he received abundant assurance of goodwill, not the least gratifying being a letter from the veteran Labour leader, George Howell, who, speaking of the " miserable intriguing in the House and out of it to keep you out of the leadership when Mr. Gladstone resigned," said (October 8) :

*George Howell to Harcourt.*

. . . Perhaps you know all about it, perhaps you do not. But we were canvassed in the House pretty closely as to a successor before Mr. Gladstone's resignation became a fact; before its contemplation, so far as I am aware. I was canvassed and this is what happened. I said, rather bluntly and uncivilly you will probably say, "What the devil do you mean?" "Is Mr. Gladstone dead, or dying?" "No, but we must be prepared for emergencies." "Well," I said, "in that event we cannot go to the House of Lords for a *leader*; he must be *in* the Commons." "But it is Mr. Gladstone's wish." I replied, "When Mr. Gladstone fails to lead *we* must choose our leader, not have him thrust upon us." What made me uncivil and brusque was that this kind of thing was going on around me. . . .

Perhaps the cheers at the Foreign Office reassured you somewhat. They were intended to do so. I may never see the inside of the House again, and therefore the leadership may not be of so much consequence to me personally. But I have known you, Sir William, longer than most men, ever since you rendered such distinguished services to the cause of America in her Civil War, in which I was a humble worker on the side of the North, and I remember also your help in the cause of Labour, when helpers were few, from about 1872 and especially in 1873. . . .

It seemed on the face of things that the resignation had left the path clear to Harcourt. Lord Rosebery had reverted to the position which he had so often assumed—in Mr. Morley's phrase, "a dark horse in a loose box"—and there was no other obvious competitor to Harcourt, whose achievements in the past two Sessions had raised his parliamentary prestige to a level little below that which Gladstone had enjoyed. But the rupture in the Party, so far from being healed by the resignation, seemed widened and embittered, and men were now definitely catalogued as being on "Harcourt's side" or "Rosebery's side," as the case might be. Mr. Morley went to Glasgow on November 6, and mingled praises of Lord Rosebery—"that eminent man, of so many brilliant gifts and talents"—with criticism of his action. But he would not enter on the question of succession. It was enough for the present to say that Sir William Harcourt led them in the House of Commons in a way that extorted universal admiration.

And speaking at Blyth a little later, Sir Edward Grey said that the Liberal leadership would have to remain vacant for the present, as there was no one who could be chosen leader so unanimously that he could command the position. In the Liberal Press the general current of opinion was still in favour of Lord Rosebery. He had resigned, but his friends had determined that no one should succeed him and that the place should remain open for the time when the dark horse should emerge once more from the loose box.

• It was no longer a personal issue. The fissure in the Liberal ranks on the subject of Imperialism was steadily widening, and Harcourt and Lord Rosebery represented the opposed schools of thought. There was a rather hare-brained proposal that Gladstone should be induced to return to Parliament temporarily to tide over the trouble, and in some quarters Mr. Asquith was discussed as an alternative. He was supposed to have leanings, like Sir Edward Grey, to the Rosebery camp, but Harcourt did not share the attitude towards him which some of his supporters held. Writing to Mr. Morley, he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, *November 4.*—Many thanks for your friendly letter. Every effort has been made by the mischief-makers to cause ill blood between me and Asquith, but I have steadily refused to listen to them. I have had every reason to rely on his good faith and good will, and never allow myself to be influenced by gossip. No one has more reason than I have to value and be grateful for the constant support I received from *all* my colleagues last Session, and I hope they had no reason to complain of want of "explicit" confidence on my side.

The controversy between the factions went on in the Press for some months, but Harcourt remained silent. He realized that it was an idle discussion that events alone would settle. There was in fact no precedent for the election of a leader of the Party as a whole, as distinguished from the leader of the Party in the House of Commons. Lord Rosebery himself had never been elected leader by



the Party, and he held that nominal position simply in virtue of the fact that he had been Prime Minister, a position which he had reached without the Liberal Party, either in the House of Commons or in the country, being consulted in the remotest way. In these circumstances the "resignation" had little practical importance other than as a declaration that in the future the Party must make a choice between Lord Rosebery and Harcourt. It could have one or the other, but it could not have both. Which it would choose was a question that could only arise in a concrete shape when a Liberal victory made the formation of a new Government necessary. In the meantime Harcourt was leader of the Party in the House of Commons, and therefore the *de facto* leader of the Party generally. The leadership *de jure* was a matter for the future, and Harcourt, immersed in the question of Irish finance and the procedure of the approaching Commission on the Jameson Raid, remained indifferent to a discussion as irrelevant as it was angry. "The idiots in the Press," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 30), "seem to think every one is ready to cut one another's throat in order to become 'Leader of the Liberal Party.' For my part, if I did not think it currish to bolt in the presence of difficulties, I should take up my hat and say good-bye."

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE RAID INQUIRY

Harcourt's examination of Rhodes—Colonial Office ignorant—Harcourt assured that Chamberlain was in no way privy to the Raid—Reasons for failing to pursue the inquiry—Condemnation of Cecil Rhodes—Defends Chamberlain in the House—Distrust of Chamberlain's African policy—Chamberlain's praise of Rhodes—Government Education Bill—A recantation by Lord Salisbury—Impotence of the Concert of Europe—The Cretan Revolt—"Splendid Isolation"—The Diamond Jubilee—Stiff Words with Chamberlain—Arnold-Forster's Army reforms.

IT will not be necessary to tell again the story of the South African Committee. It is a matter of history and all that concerns us here is Harcourt's part in it and the controversies springing from it in which he was involved. That he went into it determined to probe the squalid story of the Raid to the bottom and to disclose the truth whatever it was and whomsoever it implicated is beyond doubt. Writing to Mr. Morley on November 18, 1896, he said, "I don't believe the stories of Joe's complicity. If they were true he would not have been so prompt in his measures. He might easily have given Jameson forty-eight hours' lead with the hope he might succeed, as Rhodes did. Anyhow I will take care that the whole story comes out—without fear or favour." That was the frame of mind in which he approached the task. But the course of the inquiry, the license allowed to witnesses to refuse information, and the general sense of undisclosed facts which remained at the end created a widespread belief that the Commission had shrunk from bringing the ultimate truth to light, and that Harcourt himself had been overawed

'by the danger of pressing too far for disclosures which would have imperilled national interests.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee met in Westminster Hall for the first time on February 16, and continued its sittings until the issue of its report in the following July. Throughout the examination of witnesses, Harcourt played the part of examiner-in-chief, and his method during the prolonged inquiry may be indicated by a contemporary description (*Yorkshire Daily Post*, February 17, 1897) of his duel with Rhodes himself :

. . . The task done, Sir William Harcourt, who had come fortified with a small cartload of Blue Books and documents, which he had ostentatiously arrayed on the table before him, took the witness at once in hand. His tones were mild and courteous, and his manner almost deferential ; but it was soon made clear that a deadly purpose lurked behind his elaborate politeness. He took the witness at once to the financing of the Raid, putting some pointed questions with reference to the payments made from the Chartered Company's funds in the weeks immediately preceding Dr. Jameson's adventure. Mr. Rhodes showed a manifest reluctance to give the information sought. He fenced with the questions, professed ignorance of the subject owing to his absence from Cape Town, and gave generally evasive answers to all questions on points of detail. Meanwhile his demeanour plainly showed that he was becoming extremely irritated at the line of cross-examination. His face, already flushed, became redder than ever, his brow contracted, and he shifted rest-

<sup>1</sup> The judgment of contemporary opinion on the subject is indicated by the account of the inquiry given in the *Annual Register*, which says : The general feeling was that the proceedings had been conducted with singular laxity or want of skill. Those interested in keeping secret the true history of the Raid were entirely successful, and it was generally by the merest chance that any fact of importance was elicited from the witnesses. The representatives of the Opposition, Sir William Harcourt, Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Buxton, were, after Mr. Rhodes had been unaccountably permitted to quit England, willing to allow the breakdown of the proceedings ; and what was even more surprising in so strict a parliamentarian as Sir William Harcourt, a witness was allowed to treat the Committee with defiance, and to pass unchecked. To a very great extent the inquiry had been obviously factitious, but in whose interest concealment was considered necessary remained undivulged. It was surmised that reasons of State had been found which outweighed party considerations, and that the leaders of the Opposition had been privately convinced that the alleged grounds were sufficient for the course adopted.

lessly in his chair, turning now to the one side and then to the other, and anon throwing himself back with an air half-impatient, half-contemptuous. Sir William Harcourt, however, appeared to take no notice of these ebullitions. In his most dulcet tones he continued his merciless analysis of the events which occurred in connection with the preparations for the Raid. His next point related to the smuggling of arms into the Transvaal through the agency of the De Beers Company. His desire was to know who authorized the carrying out of these transactions, and he was so insistent that after some little ineffectual skirmishing the witness flatly declined to answer.

Not at all disturbed by Mr. Rhodes's attitude, the Opposition leader passed on to another and apparently equally distasteful branch of the cross-examination—that relating to the posting of troops on the Transvaal border. In his statement Mr. Rhodes spoke of his acting within his rights by doing this.

"Your rights?" asked Sir William. "What do you mean by your rights?" The witness was for a time conveniently deaf. The question was pressed, and after turning impatiently about in his chair, he blurted out—

"I know I have probably done wrong. Let us suppose another case. I find that a number of people are going to Crete, and tremendous support is given to the movement. I daresay that is exactly the same thing. I daresay it is wrong."

Having delivered himself of this *tu quoque*, Mr. Rhodes flung himself back in defiant fashion in his chair, as if inviting Sir William Harcourt to break a further lance with him on the point. The Opposition leader, however, was much too old a bird to be caught in this fashion, and he branched off to another matter. If Mr. Rhodes was acting within his rights why did he not inform the High Commissioner of his plans?

"You want an answer?" was the sharp reply. "Well, I think you had better get it from the High Commissioner."

The examination next turned on the immediate circumstances under which the Raid was conducted and the degree of responsibility which attached to Dr. Jameson for it. Again there were some sharp passages between the examiner and the witness. On one occasion Mr. Rhodes took exception to the description of the Johannesburg movement as a "manufactured revolution." "Well, we'll call it a subsidized revolution," observed Sir William imperturbably. In this way the duel was kept up, with occasional brief interludes of commonplace, until the end of the sitting was approaching. Then the Opposition leader sprang another mine upon his victim. In a certain telegram from Colonel Rhodes, dated December 21, the statement was made that "Chairman would not leave (for Johannesburg) unless invited." Sir William Harcourt wished to know whether "the Chairman" here referred to was not the High

Commissioner. Mr. Rhodes could not say, and did not know ; and, finally, when further pressed, asked for time to consider his answer, giving as a reason that, absurd as it might seem, he had not read the book containing the correspondence which was quoted.

On the complicity of Rhodes and the officials of the Chartered Company there had been no shadow of doubt, but the evidence revealed the character of the conspiracy in elaborate detail. It originated, on Rhodes's own admission, from the determination of the "capitalists or those representing the mines" to upset the Kruger regime which had imposed charges on the mines that rendered the poorer reefs non-payable. Frank Rhodes, the brother of Cecil, was sent to Johannesburg to organize the agitation in the Transvaal, and Jameson was deputed to mobilize his men at Pitsani on the frontier to await the signal of the rising within. Abundant supplies of money were furnished through the Chartered Company and the De Beers Company, and arms were smuggled into Johannesburg during the summer and autumn. The date for the simultaneous action (December 28) had been fixed in a series of telegrams from Harris on behalf of Rhodes, but at the last moment a hitch occurred owing to the apparent indisposition of the general body of the Outlanders in Johannesburg to take an enthusiastic interest in the adventure, and Jameson himself sprang the mine of the 29th, the famous "women and children" telegram being post-dated for publication in London in order to give an air of chivalric glamour to the Raid. Rhodes disclaimed responsibility for the Raid on the ground that his telegram to Jameson on the 27th was intended to postpone the adventure. This disavowal gave rise to the following exchange between Harcourt and Rhodes. Harcourt quoted the telegram to Jameson on the 24th, "Company will be floated next Saturday 12 o'clock at night. They are very anxious you must not start before 8 o'clock and secure telegraph office silence. We suspect Transvaal is getting aware slightly."

*Sir William Harcourt* : That was an order, was it not, from you to Dr. Jameson to start on Saturday at 8 o'clock at night ?—No. I

do not want to shirk any responsibility, but I do not think you will find any sense like that.

"Company is to be floated next Saturday." That is, you said, "Insurrection will take place on Saturday?"—Yes, but in subsequent telegrams to this you will see there was a change.

I want to get at this particular date. You informed Dr. Jameson that the Company would be floated—that is to say, the insurrection would take place—on Saturday at 12 o'clock at night.

*Mr. Chamberlain* : I understood Mr. Rhodes to say that he did not send that telegram.

*Mr. Rhodes* : Yes, it was sent by Harris. He will be able to give you the reason for it. I knew generally that he was sending telegrams, but I did not see them all.

*Sir William Harcourt* : You sent an order to Dr. Jameson to start at 8 o'clock?—I do not think you will find that. I think it was a prohibition. •

Surely when you say to a man, "You must not start before 8 o'clock," you mean to say that he is to start afterwards?—Quite so. Dr. Jameson was very anxious to start, and if you take the whole tone of the telegrams of the last week, you will find they were really sent with the object of preventing him. You must read four or five other telegrams with the one you have read.

The words "secure telegraph office silence" were an order to cut the telegraph wire?—No.

What does this mean—that Dr. Jameson was to secure the silence of the telegraph office?—I do not know what it means. It seems absurd, does it not?

It is not absurd, because it was the thing that was done. The reason you were not able to communicate on December 29 with Dr. Jameson was that the silence of the telegraph office had been secured?

So far as the directors of the Chartered Company were concerned, Rhodes generally denied that they knew of the projected action.

The main interest of the Inquiry turned upon the question of the complicity of the Government. It was clear that the High Commissioner was not in the secret, and that every precaution was taken to keep him in ignorance. When he inquired the meaning of the presence of Jameson's force at Pitsani, Rhodes told him it was for the protection of the railway, and with that he seems to have been satisfied. But two other officials, Sir Graham Bower and Newton, were in the confidence of the conspirators. There remained

the final question of the relation of Chamberlain and the Colonial Office to the affair. The failure of the Committee to insist on the production by Mr. Hawkesley, the Chartered Company's solicitor in London, of the copy of certain telegrams which were said to have been shown to Chamberlain created a bad impression on the public mind. But there were definite suggestions that Chamberlain was personally involved. One was contained in the message of Miss Flora Shaw of *The Times* to Rhodes in which she had said, "Chamberlain is sound in case of interference of foreign Powers, but have special reason to believe wishes you to do it immediately." But in examination she declared that "she never at any time gave the Colonial Office information about the plan," and "never at any time received any information from the Colonial Office about the plan." The more serious suggestion implicating Chamberlain was in the evidence of Dr. Rutherford Harris, the secretary of the Chartered Company, who described an interview with the Colonial Secretary in the "autumn of 1895, in which "a guarded allusion" to "eventualities" in South Africa was made by Harris, whereupon Chamberlain "demurred to the turn the conversation had taken."

Upon this Chamberlain, who was a member of the Committee, seized the opportunity to go into the witness-box. He admitted that in the interview the possibility of a rising in Johannesburg, "a bloodless revolution," was mentioned by Harris. Then came the strangest incident in the singular conversation. "I remember," said Chamberlain, "a remark made by Dr. Harris in these words, 'I can tell you something in confidence.' . . . I stopped him at once, and said, 'I do not want to hear any confidential information. I am here in an official capacity, and I do not want any information of which I cannot make any official use.' " It was plain that he had reason to anticipate a revolution within the Transvaal and that he preferred not to know anything about it, but he denied emphatically "that he had the slightest suspicion of anything of the nature of a hostile armed invasion of the Transvaal."

In the light of these revelations Harcourt's repeatedly expressed conviction that Chamberlain was free from complicity in the affair underwent a change.<sup>1</sup> He still believed that he was not privy to the Raid itself, but he could no longer doubt that he had knowledge of the general movement to bring about some disturbance in the Transvaal, and he was satisfied that his intentions were not to be trusted. His feeling found expression in Parliament at the time on the proposal in the Budget to allocate £200,000 for the garrison in South Africa. He declared (April 28) that the Government were adopting a policy in South Africa which was bound to lead to war. In every utterance of Chamberlain during the last few months he had been endeavouring "to exasperate sentiment in South Africa and to produce what, thank God, he had hitherto failed in producing—a racial war." He had been defeated by the good sense and the good feeling of the people of Cape Colony. This outburst led to a bitter exchange of words between Chamberlain and Harcourt, Mr. Balfour intervening to assuage the anger. Writing to Mr. Morley a few days later, Harcourt said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

7, RICHMOND TERRACE, WHITEHALL, May 5, 1897.—There are two points on the Transvaal.

1. Whilst we are making this 6/8 lawyer's letter list of dilapidation of the Convention, we all the time are the flagrant offenders ; the principal mover in the conspiracy to overthrow the South African Government is still at large pursuing the same objects under Chamberlain's patronage, and this capital offence against the Transvaal remains unpurged and unredressed.

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<sup>1</sup> The following note by the late Lord Harcourt will indicate Harcourt's final and private view on the subject :

I was present at all the meetings of the Jameson Raid Committee of the H. of C. as my father's secretary *ad hoc*.

I knew everything that passed at their private meetings and consultations at which I was not present.

I can confidently affirm that no private or secret documents or telegrams were shown or statements made to him (W. V. H.) which influenced his judgment, conduct or conclusions.

He was early convinced and finally satisfied that Chamberlain was not privy to and had no previous knowledge of the Raid, and had never encouraged or approved it. He always believed, though this could not be subjected to proof, that Chamberlain was aware



2. I think you might well express satisfaction at the arrival of Alfred Milner [who had been appointed High Commissioner], and a hope that he will deal as judiciously with J. C.'s peremptory and warlike menaces as Sir H. Robinson did in January '96. Pray look at the despatches in the Blue Book, C.7933, p. 50 (No. 140) and p. 55 (No. 153)—and Robinson's refusal to communicate Chamberlain's message, p. 60 (No. 168)!

I don't suppose that a Secretary of State ever received such a snub from a subordinate, but no doubt Robinson's prudence and courage in refusing to be the mouthpiece of J. C.'s messages saved the situation. The passage I spoke of to-day as to the absence of any right to interfere with the internal legislation of the Transvaal except by "friendly counsels" is at p. 89, par. 32, of the same Blue Book. . . .

## II

Meanwhile the Inquiry was nearing its close, and Harcourt was engaged, "in such leisure as the delights of the weather and the garden have permitted," in drawing up a sketch report which he sent (June 12) to Chamberlain with the remark that "it sets out the main points of what I regard as taken altogether to be the most demoralizing public transaction in the sixty years' reign." He was evidently still disposed to make things easy for Chamberlain, whether on personal grounds or on public grounds or simply in the hope of still checking his drift to extreme courses is not apparent. "I have endeavoured to put the matter as regards yourself and the telegrams in a shape which I hope you will find satisfactory." Three days later, acknowledging Chamberlain's acceptance of his "sketch report" as a basis of discussion, he said that "all that seems to me essential is a reasoned and uncompromising condemnation of Rhodes." He would have no mercy for Sir Graham Bower, who knew "by secret information of his own" all that was going on in Johannesburg and with-

of, and by implication a participant in, the preparations for a rising in Johannesburg, and he never ceased to hold this belief to the end.

He also thought that this privacy rendered Chamberlain liable to something in the nature of "severe pressure" by Miss Flora Shaw, Rhodes, Rutherford Harris, Dr. Jameson and others to conceal or prevent the production of possibly illuminating documents or information.

held it from the High Commissioner ; but his main demand was that Rhodes should have the merited stigma of Parliament. "He has not only brought race hatred and distrust into Colonial politics, but lasting discredit abroad on English faith. He is the incarnation of *la perfide Albion*. This is the governing thought in my mind." Returning to London from Malwood, he wrote :

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

7, RICHMOND TERRACE, WHITEHALL, June 18, 1897.—I gave my sketch report with your letter to H. Beach this afternoon in the H. of C.

I found on my arrival in London Flora Shaw's decoded telegrams, which appear to me very serious. . . .

But as regards the arch-liar [Rhodes] they have a most grave effect. On December 30 Harris telegraphs that "Jameson moved on women and children letter"—a lie. He says, "We are confident of success." This is when Jameson was on the march. On same day, 30th, when he knew of the Raid, Rhodes *in propria persona* telegraphs, "Inform Chamberlain I shall get through all right if he supports me. . . . *I will win, and S. Africa will belong to England.*"<sup>1</sup>

Conceive the effect these last words will have.

(1) On Kruger and the Boers.

(2) On the Outlanders who did not desire British flag.

(3) On Dutch in Cape Colony and in Free State.

(4) On the public opinion of Europe and especially in Germany to whom we have always professed a desire to maintain the *status quo*.

The mendacity of the man in his pretence that what he really intended was only free trade and a *plébiscite* is sickening. This telegram was sent the day after all his protestations to C. Leonard. The telegram of the 31st December is still more impudent from the man who professed he did not desire the Raid.

<sup>1</sup> On this point there is a significant passage in Harcourt's examination of Beit. It is as follows :

*Sir William Harcourt* : Mr. Rhodes in his evidence said, "What I am afraid of is that when the change comes they will change from a Dutch Republic to an English Republic."—Witness : Yes.

You did not wish to have an English Republic there ?—We wanted the Dutch flag and a change in the personnel and to get the Outlanders their rights.

Then you do not agree with Mr. Rhodes when his telegram says, "I would not, of course, risk everything as I am doing, except for the British flag ?"—Mr. Rhodes was looking to the future. . . . I talked the matter over with Mr. Rhodes, and it was fully understood that the new Government would have to be under the Dutch flag.

I feel by the light of these telegrams that the adjectives in my sketch report are far too feeble to damn the rascality of the man.

These telegrams will light up the flame in S. Africa, and make the public here still more anxious to see what they have not seen.

The report of the Committee was issued on July 15. It charged Rhodes with "grave breaches of duty to those to whom he owed allegiance. He deceived the High Commissioner representing the Imperial Government, he concealed his views from his colleagues in the Colonial Ministry and from the Board of the British South Africa Company, and led his subordinates to believe that his plans were approved by his superiors." It acquitted Lord Rosmead, the High Commissioner, of all complicity, but severely reprimanded Sir Graham Bower. As to Chamberlain it said that neither he nor the officials at the Colonial Office "received any information which made them, or should have made them or any of them, aware of the plot during its development." It put on record an absolute and unqualified condemnation of the Raid and of the plans which made it possible and an expression of the evils to which it had given rise.

The Jameson Raid is no longer an event that awakens violent passions, and it is probable that no candid mind reading the evidence to-day would deny that the report fell far short of the occasion in severity, and that the references to the Colonial Secretary are singularly unsatisfactory. It was suggested that Harcourt had been "nobbled" by Chamberlain or by the Court; but if that was so, Campbell-Bannerman, John Ellis and Mr. Sydney (Lord) Buxton were "nobbled" also, for they signed the report with the rest and defended it in the House. The much more reasonable explanation of the action of all of them is supplied in a letter which Harcourt wrote to J. Ellis later:

*Harcourt to J. Ellis.*

MALWOOD, October 22, 1897.—I have read with much satisfaction your able exposition and defence of our much abused [South African] Committee. Like yourself I have a perfectly easy conscience in the

matter. I think we accomplished all that was possible in getting a unanimous and uncompromising condemnation of Rhodes.

If we had attempted anything more we should certainly have failed and given Rhodes a parliamentary triumph. It has been very difficult to drum into the stupid heads of some people that the telegrams could not have been obtained without the sacrifice of the report.

Of course the Rhodesites and the personal enemies of Chamberlain were most anxious to drag us into this false scent. I must thank you very cordially for the manner in which you referred to my share in the business. |

The mischief that has arisen has been mainly due to the wanton declaration of Chamberlain that he found nothing dishonourable in the conduct of Rhodes.

When I come to speak on the subject I shall characterize this conduct of Chamberlain in the manner I think it deserves. . . .

When on July 26 Mr. Philip Stanhope (Lord Weardale) made a motion in the House of Commons complaining of the inconclusive character of the report and demanding that Mr. Hawkesley should be summoned to the bar of the House and required to deliver the telegrams, Harcourt gave a statement of his views on the procedure and report of the Committee. He pointed out that the production of the cablegrams from South Africa would have meant the delay of the report, the immediate publication of which he held to be essential, and contended that the telegrams could not inculpate Chamberlain. First of all, the statements of the Colonial Secretary were on record, and, secondly, Rhodes had denied that he had stated to any one, directly or indirectly, that Chamberlain knew anything regarding the matter. He countered Miss Flora Shaw's telegram that the Colonial Office desired the Raid to come on at once with the evidence of that lady denying that she had had any information justifying the apparent meaning of that telegram. For himself, no production of telegrams would convince him of Chamberlain's complicity in the Raid :

. . . If you got these telegrams to-morrow (he said), and if they contained all that the most malignant mind could suggest—if I found that Dr. Harris had telegraphed to Mr. Rhodes saying, " I went yesterday to Mr. Chamberlain, I told him all about it, and he approved of it altogether " ; and if the Colonial Secretary and the

Earl of Selborne said that nothing of the kind took place—I, who have seen the witnesses, would believe the Colonial Secretary and Lord Selborne. (Cheers.) But if any further confirmation were wanted (which I do not want) I should find it in the conduct of the Colonial Secretary when the Raid took place. Is it possible that any man who had been a party and an accomplice in these transactions could have acted on the spur of the moment as the Colonial Secretary acted? There is no jury in the country that would believe it possible. . . .

One explanation, current at the time and long afterwards, of Harcourt's failure to insist on the production of what were known as the Hawkesley letters, was that he had been privately informed that the Queen had given her personal word, in an autograph letter to the German Emperor, that none of her Ministers was in any way whatever implicated in Jameson's lawless proceeding. On the revival of the legend in 1914 the late Lord Harcourt, then Colonial Secretary, wrote to Sir G. Fiddes :

. . . I have no hesitation in saying he (Harcourt) never received any communication of the supposed letter from Queen Victoria to the German Emperor, which I do not believe ever existed. If it had done, the fact that Queen Victoria had been permitted by her Ministers to lie to the German Emperor would not have prevented my father from bringing out the facts at the Inquiry whatever might have been the result. The reason why Mr. Chamberlain's complicity in the Raid was not further pursued was that my father became satisfied that Mr. Chamberlain was not a party to it, though my father (and I) have always been satisfied of Mr. Chamberlain's complicity with the preparations for a revolution in Johannesburg which was to result in the taking over of the Transvaal by the British Government, and I believe that the precipitate action of Rhodes and Dr. Jim upset Mr. Chamberlain's plans, and, happily for him, diverted attention from the matters in which he was engaged to others in which he had no part.

There we may leave the whole obscure episode of the Inquiry. It had achieved Harcourt's main object, the emphatic condemnation of Rhodes and of the Raid before the world. He had no desire to see the Government, and least of all the Colonial Secretary, implicated in the adventure, for that would have rendered the condemnation of Rhodes futile, would have besmirched the honour of the country

at its source, and would have made the future still more dark.\* There was reason to hope that events in South Africa, after the fiasco of the Raid, might take a peaceful turn, but if that was to be achieved the good faith and good intentions of the Government must be accepted as above suspicion. It was this consideration which was the key to Harcourt's procedure throughout. It cannot, I think, be denied, in spite of his assurances on the subject, that he had reason, in common with his colleagues in the Commission, to believe that the undisclosed telegrams would have put a darker face on the matter. The explanation he offered for the failure to insist on the production of these telegrams leaves the mind unconvinced. It was, no doubt, important to secure the production of the report and the condemnation of Rhodes speedily; but it is not clear that a strong insistence on the production of the telegrams forthwith would not have been successful. That there was no such strong insistence gave colour to the obstinate impression which prevailed at the time and still lingers that it was known that a complete revelation of the documents would incriminate the Colonial Office, and the fact that they have never since been published goes far to justify the suspicion. The common assumption is that the Rhodes party, having this evidence in their possession, used it to exercise influence over Chamberlain and the Government.

It may be that Harcourt suspected this, or, in view of his close personal relations with Chamberlain, that he had a hint of the fact given to him. This would illuminate the motives of his action. So far from wishing to involve Chamberlain and the Government with Rhodes, his whole object was to dissociate them, not merely in order to avoid what would have been a discreditable exposure of British policy to the world, but to make it possible for the Boer Government to believe in the good faith of the British Government in the matter and so create an atmosphere conducive to peace rather than war. If there was an understanding of any sort we may assume that it was on the basis that, if there was to be no excessive pressure for the

publication of the telegrams, Chamberlain was to throw over Rhodes publicly and completely. A final breach between Rhodes and Chamberlain would, in Harcourt's view, have canalized events in the direction of peace, and he was more concerned to achieve this than he was to discredit the Government and Chamberlain by proving that they were accessories before the fact. So, though knowing that Chamberlain was aware of the revolutionary movement in Johannesburg, he laid emphasis in public upon the fact that he was not privy to the corollary of that movement, the piratical enterprise of Dr. Jameson.

But if, as I assume, his object was to divorce the Government and especially Chamberlain from Rhodes, he was to suffer disappointment. Courtney and others had urged that as a practical consequence of the report Rhodes should be stripped of his privy councillorship. Not only was the suggestion ignored; but Chamberlain, speaking after Harcourt in the debate on July 26, definitely announced that the Government would do nothing and said, "We are told that we should take from him (Rhodes) the privy councillorship. I take it that the privy councillorship was conferred upon Mr. Rhodes for invaluable services which nothing can dim, and I do not see why it should be taken away because he has since made a great mistake." By this speech Chamberlain effectually torpedoed the report of which he was a signatory. There was a widespread view that the testimonial to Rhodes was wrung from him by the threat that, if Rhodes was humiliated, the suppressed telegrams would be disclosed, and it was said at the time with a good deal of authority that a member connected with the Rhodes group had come to the House armed with copies of the telegrams and prepared to read them if Chamberlain's attitude had not proved satisfactory. Whatever the true explanation of the incident may be, the effect of the speech was fatal to the cause of peace and reduced the Raid Inquiry to derision. Rhodes, exempt from punishment and publicly flattered by the Colonial Secretary, was left the nominal culprit but the real victor in the affair.

His apple-cart, to recall his own image, had been upset by the impetuosity of Dr. Jim ; but it was in a fair way of being set up again under the most distinguished auspices.

## III

While South Africa held the centre of the stage, the public mind was disturbed by other issues hardly less menacing. They also related to external affairs. In the domestic field the Session was singularly barren, only one subject of importance being raised, that of increased subsidies to the voluntary schools. Defeated on their Education Bill of the previous year, the Government, under the pressure of the Church party, brought in a measure, nicknamed the Bishops' Bill, for the relief of the denominational schools. Alluding in his speech on the Address (January 19) to the threats launched against the Government by the Church party in this connection, Harcourt said, " There has been nothing like it since the days of Thomas à Becket, and I tremble when I think that the First Lord of the Treasury may yet be seen doing painful penance at the shrine of Canterbury." He laid down the principle which later formed the basis of the Opposition case throughout the various stages of the Bill—the principle of those who " care about education a great deal and about denominationalism very little, that education should be made as good as possible in all schools," that there should be no prejudice to the interests of the board schools, and that the settlement of 1870 should be preserved in its integrity. It is unnecessary to follow in any detail the course of the struggle in Parliament over this measure, or indeed any of the comparatively unimportant home affairs of the Session.

But something must be said of the European crisis that arose in the early part of the year and overshadowed temporarily even the subject of the Jameson Raid. The seat of the trouble was that familiar scene of unrest, the Eastern Mediterranean. The failure to deal adequately with the massacres of the Armenians had left the Sultan once more comfortably entrenched behind the jealousies of the Christian



Powers, and at liberty to misgovern his people with apparently little danger of serious challenge. Salisbury, one of the signatories of the Treaty of Berlin which had re-established the Turk, had long since modified his views of the Eastern question, and in the debate on the Address in January made the remarkable admission that from the Crimean War onwards this country had "staked its money on the wrong horse," that we ought to have accepted the proposals of the Emperor Nicholas instead of drifting into the Crimean War, that we could not act effectively in the Near East without Russia. We had forfeited our expectation of her co-operation and the united action of the Powers must be secured. The suggestion that both parties were involved in the policy now so bluntly repudiated was a little audacious in view of the history of the last twenty years, which had witnessed the anti-Turkish crusade of Gladstone and pro-Turkish sympathies of Disraeli. It was peculiarly absurd so far as it applied to the present leader of the Liberal Party—for Harcourt was that in all but name—who, having sown his wild oats in the Crimean War, had been the most constant and instructed advocate of a more enlightened attitude towards Russia for forty years.

A few days after Salisbury made his historic recantation the Turkish volcano was in eruption once more, this time in Crete, which misgovernment had brought to a state of anarchy that roused popular passion in Greece. The Cretans rose under a young leader named Venizelos, and proclaimed union with Greece on February 8, Prince George of Greece being sent to the island with a small force. On February 15 another Greek force under Colonel Vassos landed to the west of Canea, which had been the scene of a massacre by the Turks. There was fighting between the insurgents and the Turks, and the admirals of the five European Powers whose warships were in Cretan waters ordered a bombardment of the insurgent quarters. The news evoked a passionate outburst of feeling in this country, and on February 22, on a motion for adjournment being moved by Labouchere, the whole Opposition front bench,

Harcourt leading the way, leapt to their feet in its support. In the debate that followed Harcourt said, "What is your position? The Greeks have joined the Crétans and you have joined the Turks." "That is not correct," interposed Mr. Balfour. "Then what is?" he demanded.

There followed weeks and months of anxious diplomacy, in which Salisbury sought through the Concert of Europe to arrive at a common policy in regard to the Turk. But the Concert of Europe was in no healthy condition, and the Powers were as usual anxious to exploit the situation for their individual ends. Germany, which had now openly assumed the rôle of the friend of the Turk, urged a blockade of the Piræus, and the coercion of the Greeks; but Salisbury maintained that prior to any action there should be a decision as to the future of Crete, insisting that the island could not continue subject to the administration of Turkey, but must be converted into a privileged province of the Ottoman Empire. The German Emperor said he would withdraw his flag from the Mediterranean rather than sanction such weakness, and, being told that this would break up the Concert of Europe, declared that the Concert did not deserve to exist if it allowed its decisions to be overruled by Greece. Meanwhile Russia advocated that Crete should not be annexed to Greece but should have autonomy, and Salisbury agreed to autonomous administration under the Turkish suzerainty. He wanted the withdrawal of all troops, but Germany opposed the idea so far as the Turkish forces were concerned. The controversy over the blockade question also continued, Germany still demanding the blockade of Greece and Salisbury limiting the blockade to Crete.

During this struggle of competing policies, the Opposition under the leadership of Harcourt and Kimberley were supporting Salisbury with reservations, Harcourt's own view throughout being that the Cretan demand for union with Greece should be conceded. Writing to Kimberley on February 21, Harcourt said:

*Harcourt to Kimberley.*

. . . There are two separate policies now before "the Concert."

(1) That which Salisbury appears to have propounded in a *Circular Note*, viz., that the Powers shall settle the future of Crete *before* taking any action in regard to Greece.

(2) That put forward by Germany (certainly supported by Russia and probably by Austria), viz., that Greece shall be compelled to retire *first* and the future of Crete deliberated on *afterwards*.

Salisbury's position is clearly the sound one, and I think he should be supported in it.

If he has the courage to stand by it, *come what may*, he will be all right. If not and he surrenders, he will be destroyed. When the Greeks have been coerced the Trojans will fall out amongst themselves.

I had a long talk with one of the Government to-day, and pressed this strongly upon him. The Cabinet are building their hopes on the support of France for Salisbury's policy. This however is a bruised reed, and there is no use contemplating anything but the contingency that Russia, Germany, Austria and France will make a joint summons to Greece to retire and on her refusal to coerce her.

My friend said, "What are we to do then?" I said without hesitation, "Stand to your guns; refuse to act with them." It is impossible to undergo a greater humiliation than for Salisbury, having declared his policy, to allow himself to be driven out of it. If we retire from the Concert on the coercion of Greece what harm can come to us? We want nothing: they can do us no injury. . . . If we are to part from them [the Powers] sooner or later we had better have the severance at once on the coercion of Greece.

He was so much disposed at this time to support Salisbury that he declined to receive a deputation hostile to the Premier's attitude.

*Harcourt to P. W. Clayden.*

MALWOOD, *January 30, 1897*.— . . . Lord Salisbury's recent utterances and actions appear to me a notable and satisfactory advance in the direction of a reversal of the Beaconsfield policy of 1876. Lord Salisbury has expressed his regret that the proposals of the Emperor Nicholas in 1844 and 1851 were rejected. Those proposals distinctly pointed to arrangements that should be made between Russia and England in view of the ultimate dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. This is one of the most important declarations coming from a British Prime Minister indicating a fundamental change in the pro-Turkish policy of the last forty years. Lord Salisbury appears at present to be occupied in inducing the Great Powers to agree on measures of coercion to compel reforms in the

Ottoman dominions. It is certain that if he were to put forward the immediate dissolution of the Turkish Empire all his efforts in this direction would fail, and the Armenian and other subjects of the Porte would lose all chance of any protection. . . .

In his speeches in the country he observed a critical attitude, adopting the case of the Greeks with great fervour. His new confidence in Salisbury began to waver under the evidence that he was yielding too much to the Powers in order to preserve the semblance of the Concert. He was outraged by the idea of coercing the Cretans when we knew their cause to be just, and rather than employ force against Greece until the freedom of the Cretans was established he would have withdrawn from co-operative action. His complaint against Salisbury was, not that his policy was wrong, but that he was weak in the pursuit of it. In a speech at Norwich, March 17—described by the *Daily Chronicle* as probably the greatest of his career—he dealt with the Concert of Europe, and referring to the Armenian massacres, said :

. . . I do Lord Salisbury the justice to believe that he did what he could to avert this undying shame which has come to Europe and Great Britain. If the Concert had forbidden those crimes Armenia would have been saved. If the Concert had blockaded Turkey as they are now blockading Crete, those horrors at which, as Lord Salisbury said, the world turns pale might have been stopped. . . . Lord Salisbury has said that he was powerless because the rest of the Powers would not act. . . . What a spectacle! The Prime Minister of England sitting in the midst of the Concert of Europe like the cat in the adage "letting I dare not wait upon I would." . . . There was a moment in the Concert of Europe when Lord Salisbury stood out originally last summer on the blockade of Crete, when he stood out and prevailed, and if he had stood out now he would have prevailed. Concerts of the Powers of Europe are numerous in the records of Europe. They may be good things, or they may be bad things—that depends on the principles on which they are founded and the objects at which they aim. At the commencement of this century, after the great French wars, there was a combination which was called by the title of the Holy Alliance. The principles of the Holy Alliance were these—to maintain peace in Europe by the maintenance of despotism there. That was the basis of the Holy Alliance. The then Conservative Government of the Duke of Wellington and Lord Castlereagh declined to enter it or to have

anything to do with it. That is exactly the principle which is put forward in the front of this Concert. They talked of the Holy Alliance and the peace of Europe, but the real object was to guarantee despotism. . . . These are the Powers who, in the name of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire, have betrayed Armenia, and are about to blockade Crete. (Cheers.) The whole thing is a pretence. . . . No one believes it, no one desires it. They are not thinking of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire at all; they are only thinking of what each one can get out of it.

In my opinion every breach of that integrity is so much gain for mankind. . . .

Well, if they had ever been as ready, as I said before, to blockade Turkey as they have been to blockade Crete, they might have done something for the good of mankind (hear, hear); but when it becomes a question of coercing the Turks, why then they say, "God forbid! We shall all go to war with one another."

But, while they were pottering and doing nothing, and discussing, the six ambassadors together at Constantinople and representatives at Crete, there came in another Power (hear, hear)—not a great Power, but a small Power, a brave Power (cheers), a free Power—which dared something for the emancipation of its oppressed compatriots, and Greece has accomplished the object she had in view (cheers), and has rescued the people there from the heel of the Turk, and has dispensed, we hope for ever, with his integrity. And now it is Greece that is to be coerced, and the British fleet, that fleet of which we are all so justly proud, is to be an instrument in the coercion of Greece. . . .

He returned to the denunciation of the Concert of Europe in a speech in the House on the adjournment (April 12). "All they (the Powers) have been doing in Crete," he said, "has been backing the wrong horse, and bombarding the wrong people. . . . I see you have sent mountain batteries to Crete. What are you going to do with those mountain batteries? Are you going into the mountains to fire autonomy out of these cannons into the Christians of Crete." The next day, speaking at the Eighty Club, he discussed a subject which always occupied much of his thought—the basis of our relations with other nations. He desired that this country should be the friend of all States, but the instrument of none. He had always deplored and condemned that quarrelsome spirit, that insolent assertion of Jingoism—squabbling at one time with France about this, suspecting Russia about that, denouncing Germany about the other

—a tone and an attitude which had at times led to what had been foolishly boasted of as "splendid isolation":

. . . I desire no splendid isolation for England (he said) any more than I should desire splendid isolation for any friend of mine. But I am equally opposed to all engagements which bind England to dangerous obligations with great military and despotic powers, whose interests are not ours, whose objects are not ours, whose sympathies, whose convictions are not ours. That is why no British minister has ever dared to propose to join the Triple Alliance or the Dual Alliance. It has kept a free hand, as England ought always to keep a free hand, for a free people. But now it seems we are to become, or have become, committed to a Federation. It is called by Lord Salisbury a Federated Legislature, which has the right to overrule the privileges and the powers of every independent State and to coerce it to its will. . . . This Federation of nations is, we are told, the Arcopagus of the world. . . .

He illustrated the advantage of a friendly but independent policy by showing how Canning was able seventy years before to defeat the objects of the Holy Alliance and to help to free the Greeks and the South American republics. Replying a few days later to a letter from Edward Russell (afterwards Lord Russell of Liverpool), he said:

. . . I have always been a Canningite. You and Gladstone have a Liverpool title in his name and fame.

I have often heard Mr. G. speak of his remembrance of him at the house of his father there who was Canning's great political friend.

I was born in the same year as that of his death (2 months after that fatal blow to the true policy of England). But I have worshipped at his shrine ever since my boyhood, and have deplored the decadence which has overtaken our latter day statesmanship. . . .

Meanwhile the storm in the Near East came to a head with the declaration of war by Turkey against Greece, the sympathies of Germany being shown by the presence of German officers with the Turkish army. In this country, on the other hand, there was widespread enthusiasm for the Greeks. The conflict was brief and disastrous for Greece, and through the intervention of the Powers an armistice was signed in May. Peace was not concluded until December, and the Cretan question was not settled until the following year (after the withdrawal of Germany and Austria from the Concert

of Europe). In the November of that year the last Turkish troops left Crete, and the island State, with Prince George of Greece as High Commissioner for the Powers, had finally escaped from the blight of Ottoman misrule.

In spite of the admission that in our Eastern policy in the past we had put our money "on the wrong horse," the traditional suspicion of Russia still lingered on, especially in relation to India. This suspicion played its part in the Chitral incident which Harcourt resisted as a menace to our frontier policy in India. That policy was based on a friendly Afghanistan and the buffer of free mountain tribes between. Writing to Lewis Harcourt, he said :

*Harcourt to his son, L. V. Harcourt.*

MALWOOD, September 14.— . . . The whole Lawrence policy we have always maintained was against annexation. The policy is well explained in the last chapter of A. Lyall's book which is well worth reading. The barrier against Russia was to be a friendly Afghanistan, and a fringe of independent tribes also was to be relied upon to be hostile to any Power which threatened to invade them, whether it were England or Russia. When Kimberley talks of Russia stirring up the tribes against us, we have always held that in case of an advance of Russia we should stir up the tribes against her, and that they would be hostile to any Power that interfered with them. The great mistake seems to have been pursuing neither one policy nor the other both North and South of Peshawar. To have subdued and annexed the tribes in all their valleys and occupied them in force we would require an immense force with a population bitterly hostile.

. . .  
If Chitral is to be occupied in force it will require with the communications 100,000 men—which India is quite unable to afford. The thing is still worse south of Peshawar, as the valleys are more numerous and the tribes equally hostile.

The real danger to India is in the burthen of taxation which breeds general discontent. . . .

He was opposed to a forward policy which aimed at subduing the mountain tribes, and in writing to Mr. Morley drew attention to Mr. Curzon's (Earl Curzon) statement, "I do not deny, however, that the steady infringement of a powerful and organized Government upon less civilized communities causes from time to time these explosions." "'The steady infringement of a powerful Government,'" said Harcourt,

" is the latest euphemism for the Forward Policy. No wonder the less civilized communities find it difficult to reconcile it with their independence." In this matter, subsequent experience has been emphatically on the side of Harcourt, and the most enlightened official opinion in India is confirmed in support of the Lawrence doctrine.

## IV

The celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria—which made the summer of 1897 memorable—gave Harcourt, who enjoyed the ceremonies of State and the social functions of life with peculiar zest, abundant and agreeable occupation. He had a genuine affection for the Queen, and, though in his official relations with her he had never failed in candour or in what he conceived to be his duty to Parliament, he had much of the instinct of the courtier and did not forget those little flatteries and attentions which meant so much to his Sovereign. His own life had run almost parallel with hers, and in his speech (June 21) on the Address to her from Parliament, he recalled " as if it were to-day the booming of the guns which announced the accession of the Queen." He surveyed the achievements of the reign, and after describing the improvement that had taken place in the condition of the people, said :

. . . I can recall the fears of the brave and the follies of the wise, who dreaded lest the extension of popular power might endanger the constitution of the country. Yet it must be acknowledged that in these sixty years the Queen has given the final sanction to measure after measure of democratic reform. And each extension of popular right has only strengthened the Monarchy, and increased the confidence of the people. (Cheers.) Queen Victoria has never feared her people. (Loud cheers.) . . . In this memorable growth of our race and of our Empire there has proved, for two generations of men, one figure who has presented to the world the British name with a noble simplicity of greatness, which has not been known before, and which will live for ever in the records of this nation. It has been asked what has been the office which the Queen has performed ? That office has been the supreme tie which bound together various classes and divers races in these vast dominions, which has held them in one united whole by a sovereign partaking the spirit of the



people, which has gathered them in growing affection round her throne. . . .

It is not for me to attempt to portray a character known and admired and loved by all. Those who have served her themselves in any capacity will ever cherish the memory of her gracious kindness, of her upright judgment, of her ripe experience and her constitutional fidelity. Her public as her private life has been a lesson to all in every station. The first in virtue, as the first in place, she has added dignity to a mighty throne, and deserved the passionate loyalty of a free people. She will leave to those who come after her larger dominions and a happier people ; but what is more, she will bequeath to future times the imperishable inheritance of a sovereign example.

The revels and functions in connection with the celebration continued for several weeks during the summer, the social engagements culminating in the famous Devonshire House Ball, at which most of the people conspicuous in the social and public life of the time appeared in fancy costume. Lord Rosebery, for example, was there as Horace Walpole, Mr. Asquith as a Roundhead, Mr. Balfour as a Dutchman of the Seventeenth Century, and the ex-Speaker Peel as a Doge of Venice. Harcourt represented his own ancestor, Lord Chancellor Harcourt. An important feature of the Diamond Jubilee celebrations was the presence of the Premiers from the Overseas Dominions, and at a luncheon given to them by the Eighty Club Harcourt delivered a panegyric on the ideas of free institutions and self-governing communities which during the reign had established Greater Britain on so enduring a basis. When, later in the year, the Queen presented Harcourt with a portrait of herself as she appeared at the Jubilee, he wrote, in thanking her, " Sir William has placed it next to the picture by Landseer of the Queen on horseback in the year of her accession to the Throne. He thinks himself happy to have been a witness of the whole course of Your Majesty's fortunate and glorious reign, and of the growth of your Empire and the prosperity and happiness of your people."

In the autumn Harcourt paid his annual visit to Wiesbaden, when he received a satisfactory report on his defective eye. He returned to fulfil engagements in Scotland, where he







*Sir William Vernon Harcourt  
as Lord Chancellor Harcourt (tempe Queen - Anne)  
with Lady Desborough and - Mr. A. J. Balfour  
at the Devonshire House Jubilee Ball 1897*



spoke at Dundee (November 25) and Kirkcaldy. "I thought your speeches admirable in all ways," wrote Mr. Morley, "and the second of them about the best that you ever made in your life. It ought to put some backbone into our rickety Party." "Your North Briton," replied Harcourt, "is a very hearty fellow and like some of your best friends squeezes your hand so hard that it hurts." His public activities were not limited to the platform, and a controversy in the Press between him and Chamberlain attracted much public attention by the energy with which they exchanged strong epithets. Mr. Morley, who had enjoyed the "very well-earned trouncing" Harcourt had given Chamberlain, expressed regret that he had not kept it for his Dundee speech. "But you have plenty more, I daresay," he said. "And if you don't already know it, let me tell you that there is nothing that our worthy Scots enjoy more keenly than good banter. As you have found out by bitier experience, *I* am of the heavy school, but I know that when occasionally I treat them to a flicker of a smile, they like it much better than anything else." Harcourt, in explaining why he did not delay, said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, November 11, 1897.— . . . I confess that Joe's insistence in dealing with us as "criminals" did rile me on Sunday afternoon. I thought it necessary to tackle him at once, as his Glasgow Jubilee seems to have turned his head, and to show him that we did not intend to stand his impudence. I thought it better not to delay the onslaught, as these things require to be served up like toast hot and hot. It seemed to me that Balfour made a mistake in taking a six months' old speech of mine as his text at Norwich. I daresay a ram or two will be provided for me before Dundee, and I shall gather inspiration from the humorous good humour of Campbell-Bannerman. . . .

His relations with his opponents, however, were generally cordial, and for Hicks-Beach, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had a high appreciation, which was increased by Beach's soundness on Harcourt's *bête noire*, bimetallism. Writing to James (October 23), he said :

*Harcourt to James.*

. . . Though I believe you are—as you were when you had the Lancashire taint on you—a confounded bimetallist, I congratulate you that the good sense and firmness of the Chancellor of the Exchequer has saved you all from the follies of Balfour, Chaplin & Co. I hope now that we have finally done with this rubbish, but it was touch and go when I saved the situation in 1893 by putting Alfred Rothschild and Rivers Wilson on the Brussels Conference, which had been packed by Goschen under the influence of A. Balfour and Houldsworth. I have been plying Beach all the autumn with warnings and remonstrances, for I knew what a difficult game he had to play. But he is very sound and plucky, and, as I care more for good finance than for anything else, I am very glad the keys of the Exchequer are in such good hands. He is going to have another rattling surplus this year, which is always a more embarrassing possession than a deficit. But, however, I doubt not your “lot” will find means to spend it.

There was one new member of the Government, however, who incurred the wrath of Harcourt. He had come into parliamentary life as a colleague of Cardwell, and had remained a firm believer in the Army reforms which Cardwell had introduced. The new scheme of Army inflation not only offended his anti-militarist ideas, but also his convictions on Army administration, and he roundly denounced “the fallacies of those coxcombical amateurs—Messrs. A. Forster & Co.” “I believe,” he wrote to Mr. Morley, “they will find their Army inflation a very bad business before they have done. To have been handed over to such a tormentor as the conceited prig, Arnold-Forster, is punishment enough for all their crimes.”

## CHAPTER XXIII

### HARCOURT AND CHAMBERLAIN

Salisbury's foreign policy—Madagascar—The partition of China—  
Chamberlain's anti-Russian speech—Death of Gladstone—  
The South African storm clouds—A letter to Chamberlain.

"THE condition of things in Europe, Asia, Africa and America is such as to make me bless my stars that it is the other fellows and not we who have the responsibility of dealing with them," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley on January 6, 1898. "What a mess we should have made of it! I believe Salisbury to be by nature and conviction a man of peace, and I at least will be no party to vex him on that account." Harcourt's concern was not exaggerated. Clouds were blowing up from every quarter of the political sky, and it seemed a question, not so much whether disaster would come, but from what direction it would come. We had achieved "splendid isolation," but we had achieved it on the basis not of general goodwill, but of almost universal ill-will. The latest phase of the recurrent disturbance in the Near East had passed its crisis, but it remained a serious danger-point, and in revealing Germany as the protector of the Turk it had given the practical *coup de grâce* to the phantom of the Concert of Europe. A French expedition was advancing from the basin of Lake Chad in the direction of the Nile and would presently come in collision with the British troops advancing south against the Mahdi. In the Far East the dissolution of China, reeling from the effects of the war with Japan, seemed imminent, and the European Powers were engaged in a scramble for the estate. The new forward policy in India, of which the Chitral expedition



was the expression, opened out the prospect of perilous developments. Most disquieting of all, the shadow had not lifted from South Africa. The inquiry into the origin of the Raid, so far from dispersing the trouble, had embittered it, for it had left the chief author of the invasion, unrepentant and publicly flattered by Chamberlain, free to pursue the policy which, so far from disavowing, he had frankly, almost truculently defended.

In the midst of this riot of discordant motives, Harcourt never lost his confidence in the honesty and peaceful purpose of Salisbury. In a survey of the world situation which he made at Bury on February 22, he pointed his finger at what he regarded as the chief menace to peace. While Lord Salisbury, he said, was engaged in the arduous business of delicate and dangerous negotiations with the great European Powers, he had on his hands the not less delicate work of keeping in check his own Jingo colleague, the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In this momentous hour, the foes of the Prime Minister were not his political opponents, but members of his own household. While Lord Salisbury was doing his best to secure "peace with honour," his own Colonial Secretary was talking and behaving in ways which, if not disowned and condemned, would in a measurable period lead to war. In regard to the spirit of foreign policy, Harcourt was in fuller sympathy with Salisbury than with some of his Liberal colleagues. "The universal hostility to England abroad is natural and inevitable," he had written to Mr. Morley on January 6. "How should it be otherwise when we go swaggering about declaring our supremacy in every quarter of the globe. We appropriate Hong-Kong, Burmah, Uganda, Rhodesia, Cyprus, Egypt, etc., etc., and then consider it a national outrage against ourselves if any other nation ventures to take anything anywhere. What can be more preposterous?" A few weeks later in the House of Lords, Salisbury publicly denounced this Jingo attitude in almost equally strong language. He saw the danger of a reaction to the doctrines of thirty or forty years before "when

it was thought to be our duty to fight everybody and take everything," and warned the country that this "dangerous doctrine" not only incited other nations, but threatened "to overtax our strength." Harcourt in his speech at Bury endorsed these "solemn and weighty words." They were words which were addressed, not to his opponents, but "to the rash and reckless men who sat behind him and around him and, above all, by his side." "I need not name these," he said. "I hope they will listen to his voice."

But while he had the fullest confidence in Salisbury's reasonable and pacific intentions, he was critical of his methods. He believed that he was wanting in foresight, and that he took up positions in the early stages of controversy which he was unable to maintain. Speaking on this subject later in the year (May 7) at a dinner of the Eighty Club and the Cambridge University Liberal Club, at Cambridge, he said :

. . . He [Salisbury] seems to me, for a man of great ability, to be extraordinarily deficient in foresight. When he begins, he never measures forces he has got ultimately to deal with ; he puts himself into positions which he cannot maintain ; and he makes proposals which he is not prepared or not in a position to support. Now, I do not complain of him for not pushing things to extremities. I am the last man who desires the extremity of war. But if he were wise and far-seeing he would never place himself in positions in which it is a necessity he should yield. That is the failure of Lord Salisbury's foreign policy. It is all very well to come in like a lion ; but if you have to go out like a lamb it is better not to come in like a lion. You will ultimately get more credit in your capacity as a lamb (loud laughter) if you have not begun the operation by roaring and lashing your tail. (Laughter.)

He had seen this defect in Salisbury's handling of the Cretan problem, and in the debate on the Address (February 8), when he ranged over the whole field of world commotion, he illustrated it by reference to the case of Madagascar, where the Government had allowed British rights to lapse with the domination of France in that sphere. The recognition of Madagascar as a sphere of French influence had been part of the consideration made by Salisbury to that

Power at the time of the Anglo-German agreement for the exchange of Heligoland and Zanzibar. On the results of that bargain Harcourt said :

. . . With Madagascar we had treaty rights of the most explicit character. We had treaty rights under two heads, one which gave us consular jurisdiction, and the other which gave us very favourable commercial tariffs. Now France in February, 1896, undertook the military occupation of Madagascar, and Lord Salisbury very properly reserved all British rights in the face of that occupation. . . . On the 10th of April, 1896, the annexation of Madagascar was announced, and the French minister thereupon declared the treaty rights were abrogated. Upon that, on the 10th of August, 1896, Lord Salisbury wrote, I think, as strong and peremptory a dispatch as was ever penned by a British minister, and he charged the French Government with having broken their pledges, with the abrogation of the treaty, with a violation of international law, and declared that the effect of what had been done would be to destroy the British trade with the Island. To that dispatch no reply was made. . . . The whole matter was allowed to slumber for nine months, and then Lord Salisbury asked for a reply to the dispatch of 1896. The French minister merely replied that he was rather surprised at the request after such a lapse of time, and that he had nothing more to say about it, for the treaties were abolished, the English tariff was gone, and the French tariff applied.

The gravity of the outlook abroad was reflected in the ominous increase of armaments at home. Writing to Harcourt from South Africa, Sir Alfred Milner, who had been associated with him in the preparation of the famous Budget, congratulated him on the surprising results of the death duties. But the ample surpluses which those duties were providing for the Exchequer were being swallowed up by unprecedented new demands for the army and the navy. The panic movement in connection with the latter was stimulated now, not by comparisons with the French navy so much as by alarmist statements as to the new building contemplated by Russia, which had, in the midst of the general peril, resumed for a moment her old position in the popular view as the principal villain of the European stage. That stage was thronged with "villains." France was challenging us in the Nile valley, Germany, under the disturbing influence of the young Emperor, had shown her

hand unpleasantly in the Near East, and Russia was supposed to be menacing our position in the Far East. It is significant that in a voluminous correspondence which Harcourt carried on at this time with Sir A. Haliburton on the subject of the proposed reforms in army administration—a discussion too technical to be dealt with here—he discussed the hypothesis of a war with Russia followed or rather accompanied by a war with France. “My hypothesis is not an impossible one in the estimation of many persons,” he wrote to Haliburton, “and will certainly have to be met in argument.” The pre-eminence of Russia as the potential enemy lent weight to Harcourt’s powerful resistance in Parliament to the forward policy in India which, in antagonizing the mountain tribes of the frontier, would weaken our defensive system against Russian attack. On this subject he spoke with his customary erudition. His old habit of grinding up the facts of any subject with which he had to deal never deserted him, and his knowledge of the physical, ethnographical and political considerations involved in penetrating and holding the passes of the Himalayas made a marked impression on the debate.

## II

But the immediate trouble with Russia had its roots, not in India, but in the Far East. After the overthrow of China by Japan, the former country had sought the protection of Russia. Li Hung Chang, as a means of guaranteeing China in the event of an attempt by Japan to obtain a footing on the mainland, had given facilities for the construction of Russian railways in Manchuria. He had also sought to obtain a loan of £12,000,000 from England. To the latter proposal Russia objected, and when negotiations were opened for raising the money in St. Petersburg, Great Britain protested. Eventually the money was advanced by the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation with the assistance of a German bank. In the meantime the murder of two German missionaries in Shantung gave Germany the excuse for entering into

the competition for China. Kiao-Chow was seized and a ninety-nine years' lease of the port was obtained, together with the cession of mining and railway rights in the province of Shantung. Thereupon Russia secured a lease of Port Arthur on the terms accorded to Germany at Kiao-Chow. These events aroused great feeling in this country, whose interests in China seemed menaced by the substitution of "spheres of influence" for the traditional British policy of the "open door." In the House of Lords, Salisbury sought to calm the public suspicions by the assurance that "nobody has yet suggested the slightest intention of infringing our treaty rights in that part of the world." Germany had, indeed, expressed friendliness for the British policy of the open door. But the subsequent developments, and especially the vetoing of the British loan by Russia, aggravated the alarm, and Harcourt, who, while anxious to avoid a rupture with Russia, was equally anxious for the maintenance of our treaty rights and the "open door" policy, was alarmed at what seemed the irresolute attitude of the Government in connection with the leasing of Port Arthur. In the course of a letter (March 10) to Mr. Balfour, giving notice of a question in the House, he drew attention to "the pernicious and scandalous scares which are being concocted every day in the Press and notably by *The Times*," and said :

*Harcourt to Mr. A. J. Balfour.*

. . . I wish in this matter, regardless of party considerations, to do as much good and as little harm as possible, but I feel that there is a deliberate attempt in progress to create a dangerous excitement in the public mind which the Government, if they allow it to grow, will find it difficult to control. The idiots who are clamouring for a war with Russia imagine that it will be waged by sea, whereas anybody who knows anything about it is perfectly aware that the Russians in two months would place 100,000 men, and if necessary 500,000 men at Herat, and invite the valiant Roberts to come and meet them there.

Mr. Balfour requested Harcourt to delay his interpellation. It was obvious that Russia, while willing that Ta-lien-wan should be a treaty port, excluded Port Arthur from the

condition. The matter was not discussed in the House until April 29. In the meantime there had been much excitement over the withdrawal of British ships from Port Arthur at the request of Russia, and the British Government had set up a claim to the lease of Wei-hai-wei on the same conditions and for the same period that Port Arthur was held by Russia. In the debate on the Foreign Office vote on April 29, Harcourt subjected the proceedings of the Government to a devastating analysis. Their policy had been wise in intention, but it had failed in fact. They had undertaken to oppose the dismemberment of China, to preserve the principle of the open door, and not to recognize "spheres of influence." But Germany had got Kiao-Chow, and Great Britain had no definite agreement that it would be a free and open port. The principle that there should be no spheres of influence had been abandoned. The British loan had been withdrawn under menace from Russia—a statement hailed with angry cheers not only from the Opposition but from many ministerialists. The indignation on the ministerial benches was renewed when Harcourt read the despatch in which Salisbury explained away the presence of British ships at Port Arthur, and promised their immediate withdrawal. "The British ships," said Harcourt, "were there by treaty right, and should have remained there." Mr. Balfour's defence turned mainly upon the assumption that Wei-hai-wei was a set-off to Port Arthur. We had Wei-hai-wei, Germany had Kiao-Chow, the whole commercial world had obtained wide and valuable concessions in China, whilst Russia had aroused the distrust of the nations and was worse off than she was seven months ago. Speaking on the subject in his speech at Cambridge on May 9, Harcourt said :

. . . Lord Salisbury claims to be judged by results. . . . Let us look at the results. He set himself against territorial occupations in China because they would dismember that Empire. Well, the territorial occupations have taken place everywhere, and he has taken part in them himself. That is the result of the first principle he has laid down. He negotiated a loan with China. That loan was accepted by China, but it was withdrawn under threats from

Russia, and there was no loan. He stipulated that Ta-lien-wan should be a Chinese treaty port. Well, it is not a Chinese treaty port; it has become a Russian port which is not the same thing. He defended open doors and equal opportunity; he has not got either—either in Shan-tung or Liao-tung. There is hardly a demand that he has made which he has not withdrawn, and how does he meet it all? Why, with an audacity which really, but for the dignity of the man, I should describe as farcical. He spent many months in discussing the terms upon which Russia should occupy Port Arthur, and all of a sudden he discovered there was a great danger in Russia being at Port Arthur at all; it would dominate Peking and be highly injurious to British interests. It is when Port Arthur is occupied that he says that Port Arthur is of no consequence, that Russia would have been better without it, and that it is no use whatever. Then why did he protest against the occupation of Port Arthur, and why did he take Wei-hai-wei to counteract it? . . . But, after all these things, after all these solemn proposals, he says they were of no consequence. I do not know whether Dickens and his writings have gone out of fashion among the youth of Cambridge. I hope not. But there was a character who always interested me very much in my youthful days—a young gentleman of a very amiable kind, who was constantly making most ardent and tender proposals to a lady and who, when they were refused, in order to console her and himself, always assured her that it was of no consequence whatever. (Laughter.)

There was a significant sequel to the diplomatic struggle in a speech which Chamberlain delivered at Birmingham on May 13. Whatever gloss the peaceful members of the Government might put on the result of the controversy, their pugnacious colleague was not disposed to "take it lying down." He denounced the policy of isolation, referred to Russia in the most provocative terms, remarking that "who sups with the devil must have a long spoon," urged alliance with those Powers whose interests approximated most closely to our own, and said that terrible as war was it would be cheaply purchased if "for a great and noble cause the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack should wave together over an American alliance." The outburst was the more inexcusable in view of the fact that we were at the time involved in difficulties with France, not only in Siam, but in West Africa, while the two countries were on the brink of conflict in the Nile Valley. But although

the incident-aroused much comment in France and Russia, and was raised in the House of Lords by Kimberley, who said that what Chamberlain proposed was a gigantic change in the policy of this country, there was no immediate reference to it in the Commons. Harcourt did not wish to bring on a debate which would have emphasized some of the worst aspects of the utterance; but his restraint caused strong criticism in some quarters, and there followed this sharp exchange between Mr. Morley and Harcourt:

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

57, ELM PARK GARDENS, May 16.—I must say plainly that in my opinion no Opposition so failed in public duty as we did this afternoon. One of the most flagitious speeches ever made by an English minister is allowed to pass by without our even asking that we might discuss it on Friday, or putting so much as a question about it. You will denounce it on Wednesday and so shall I on Saturday, but outdoor fireworks not backed by direct challenge face to face are poor business after all. And why should the scene of action be shifted to the Lords, when we have the misdemeanant himself two yards off in front of us?

•I don't want to trouble you, but my disgust is of the intense species, and I must wash my hands of all responsibility. So I write this which requires no reply.

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

7, RICHMOND TERRACE, WHITEHALL, May 17.—I thought you had acquiesced in the view that to give Chamberlain the support of an overwhelming parliamentary majority would not be politic either in a party or an international point of view—especially as you said nothing to the contrary when we were gathered together in my room.

If Chamberlain is to be defeated it must be by encouraging the dissensions on his own side, and not by consolidating them on a vote of censure.

The yeast is working to good effect as you will see by the article in the *Standard* this morning. I do not find in our Press any sign of dissatisfaction with what passed yesterday.

It seems to me very important that we should know to what extent Salisbury is at the back of Chamberlain.

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

May 17, 1898.—No division would have been needed on the request for Friday. I said nothing in your room, because the time was past.

I don't agree in the yeast and leaven theory at all. As for *our*



*Press*, talk to me of anything but that ! However, *liberavi animam*, and I've no more to say.

When the speech came under discussion on "June 10 its meaning, pointing apparently in the direction of an alliance with Germany, was powerfully analysed by Mr. Asquith. The practical conclusion of Chamberlain's utterance, he said, was that we must seek the alliance of a great military Power. If we were to encounter Russia, who could that Power be but Germany ? The alliance of Germany was not to be had for nothing, and if we worked with her in the different parts of the world her colonizing ambitions were certain to involve us in conflict with other Powers. He thought our best hope was to act in friendship and co-operation with Russia, but in no case could our object be obtained by a policy of alternate bluster and retreat.

### III

Upon these agitated themes there fell on May 19 the news of an event that for the moment silenced all factions and resolved all discords. On the morning of that day Gladstone passed away at Hawarden, and two days later in both Houses of Parliament the tributes of all parties were paid to the illustrious statesman who, in Mr. Balfour's words, was admitted to have been "the greatest member of the greatest deliberative assembly that the world has ever seen." The occasion lifted Parliament to an unwonted level of eloquence, and Harcourt's contribution was not unequal to its fellows. In the course of his speech he said :

. . . He came into this famous Chamber with a mind stored with various knowledge, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, literary and political, a finished intellect inspired by a native genius. Till the last he was ever looking for fresh materials to feed his inquiring mind in every department of human thought. . . . Who that has ever listened to it can have forgotten the rich harmony of that melodious voice, which had a charm almost of physical persuasion. Who will have forgotten the dignified presence, the lucid statement, the resources of reasoning, the high tone of passionate conviction, the vehement appeal to conscience and to truth ? . . . We can

recollect how on fitting occasions his humour played like the summer lightning around his theme, and how he exposed his opponents without a wound. And no man can say that these divine gifts were ever employed for mean or vulgar uses. They were exercised on high matters and for noble ends. It gave him a power over the hearts of the British people which, I believe, no other orator has ever possessed. . . . His conduct in the House of Commons, whether in Government or in Opposition, bore all the marks of a lofty spirit. He respected others as he respected himself, and he controlled both by his magnanimity. He was strong, but he was also gentle ; he was to us not only a great statesman, but a great gentleman. We felt, as the right honourable gentleman has said, that he exalted the spirit of the assembly of which he was the undisputed chief ; he raised it in its own estimation and in the estimation of the world, and we recognized that the House of Commons was greater by his presence, as it is greater by his memory. What he did for the House he did for the nation too. I think it is impossible to overvalue the influence which the purity and the piety of his public and private life has had upon the national life of this country. It has exercised a lasting influence upon the moral sense of the people at large. They have watched him through all the trials of a long career passed under the fierce light of political controversy, and they have found in it an example which has permanently raised the standard of public life in this nation. . . . There is not a hamlet in the land where his virtues are not known and felt. . . .

In conclusion, may I say a few words of what he was to those who had the privilege of his intimacy in private friendship and in the life of official colleagues ? I speak with an experience longer, I think, than that of any man present, and in the recollection of the constant and gracious kindness of forty-five years. I have heard men who knew him not at all, who have asserted that the supremacy of his genius and the weight of his authority oppressed and overbore those who lived and worked with him. Nothing could be more untrue. Of all chiefs he was the least exacting, the most kind and the most tolerant. He was the most placable of men. How seldom in this House was the voice of personal anger heard from his lips. These are the true marks of greatness. . . .

He has deserved well of us and of our race ; he has left us an undying memory and the precious inheritance of an enduring example.

It was with difficulty that Harcourt finished his speech. He was easily overwhelmed by his emotions, whether of anger or affection, and the end of the great political association which, in spite of all the shadows that had passed over it, had been the most enduring and the most treasured

memory of his public life moved him beyond his control. His voice became almost inaudible, and in the final passage touching on his relations with Gladstone as a colleague and as a friend he broke down completely. The House sat in silent sympathy until he regained the mastery of his feeling and struggled in broken accents to the end. At the funeral in Westminster Abbey a week later he was one of the pall-bearers, and writing to Lewis Harcourt of the scene, he said :

*Harcourt to his son, L. V. Harcourt.*

7, RICHMOND TERRACE, WHITEHALL, May 28, 1898.— . . . I have just returned from the ceremony which passed off as well as possible. All the arrangements excellent. The Lords and Commons well marshalled in each transept. The day fine, but the P. of W. insisted on the pall-bearers wearing their hats, which I regretted. I saw no sign of overcrowding. Gladstone's Government walked by themselves, and had places near the grave. J. Morley was in the H. of C., and I had a good deal of friendly talk with him.

Mrs. Gladstone was a most touching sight. She sat with the relatives during the greater part of the service just behind the coffin, and the pall-bearers in front of the choir seats till it was removed to the grave, where a chair was placed for her with her sons on each side—a terribly pathetic figure with little Dorothy in a black silk sash, very pretty, kneeling at her side. At the close she desired all the pall-bearers to come to her, and she spoke to us all quite collectedly. She thanked me for the letter I had written her yesterday, and I kissed her hand. The whole very touching and impressive. . . . Altogether it was a scene worthy of the occasion and the man.

#### IV

Apart from the disturbed condition of foreign affairs, the Session was one of unrelieved dullness, and the only measure which aroused the fighting spirit of Harcourt was the Benefices Bill, which fanned into flame all his lifelong hostility to what he regarded as the Romanizing influences in the Church of England. His opposition to the Bill led to a prolonged argument in the Press, to which reference will be made later. For the rest the Session calls for no comment. A certain brooding quiescence hung over the South African situation. The Russian quarrel, which overshadowed the spring, and the Fashoda affair, which was to overshadow the autumn, diverted public attention from the Transvaal,

but events were moving there to the inexorable conclusion. What the conclusion would be Harcourt no longer doubted. He had long been sensible of the essentially warlike temper of Chamberlain, of the potential Imperialist that lurked behind the Radical; he was convinced that Rhodes meant mischief and that his restoration had increased his power for mischief; he was aware that the mood of the country was overwhelmingly Jingo, he distrusted the new High Commissioner, Sir Alfred Milner, and, worst of all, he was aware that Imperialism was rampant in the Liberal Party itself. His gloomy forebodings were revealed in a correspondence with Chamberlain in August. The latter, who was in Switzerland on a holiday, had written to Sir A. Milner on the subject of increasing the forces in South Africa, and in sending Milner's reply to Harcourt he told him that it was possible that he might find it desirable to increase the defensive preparations. Harcourt replied:

*Harcourt to Chamberlain.*

• MALWOOD, August 29, 1898.—I am much obliged to you for sending me the A. Milner letters. You need not fear that I have "forgotten S. Africa"—on the contrary it occupies my mind much, and I gather from all quarters a good deal of information as to the state of things there. It is for that reason that I view the ideas of Milner with a good deal of disquietude.

I regard you, the Kaiser William and Milner as by nature the pattern Jingo of these times. There is nothing so irresistible to a new-born Governor-General, fresh to the trade, as the prospect of a sensational annexation, and I see clearly enough that our dear Alfred is bitten by this fly. No one admires or loves him more than I do, but he is not by nature a *safe man*. When the *proper line* is given him there is no man who will carry out a policy with greater zeal, loyalty and ability.

As you have been good enough to open the subject, and as, happily, for the moment neither you nor I have anything to do, I will as the gentleman in Shakespeare says "bestowe my tediousness on you," and expound my ideas on S. Africa for what they are worth. . . . In the first place I entirely dissent from A. M.'s opinion that the improved relations between the Cape Government and the Transvaal are due to your military and naval demonstrations. . . . And yet it is with a view to this that A. M. wants a display of more force—always more force—to "convince Dopperdom that *England means war*," if Kruger does not do our bidding. Whatever else he

is, Kruger is not a fool. If England really means war, he and his Boers with the support of the Free State and the Dutch at the Cape will fight you. If it is only as A. M. suggests, a bogus demonstration, he is not the man to be frightened by it. The general opinion, in this country—and I believe the true one—is that the Transvaal Government are at present acting in a conciliatory spirit and willing, though slowly, to admit reforms. They see no occasion or justification for fresh troops and warlike preparations. The Transvaal Government were perfectly justified in arming to resist the attacks of Rhodes, Jameson and Co.—perhaps all the more so for the panegyric you recently passed upon them. The notion of Kruger making war upon England is one no sane man entertains. No just person will dispute his right to resist a war made upon him by England. The information I have leads me to believe that the Outlanders themselves do not desire war or rumours of war. Gold is their god, and they worship no other. The Transvaal population in Johannesburg is down on its luck. If they can get their dynamite cheaper and their railway rates lowered that is all they care about. Lionel Phillips, and not Leonard, really represents them. All they want is to be let alone. Like the "needy knife-grinder" no sense of wrong will rouse them to vengeance. And Milner will be as little able as Jameson to kick them into rebellion. The only party who really want a row are the official class at the Cape. They always like to lord it over mankind and magnify their position.

I have always believed that Rhodes since the Raid has been and still is the evil genius of S. Africa. He was a man of unlimited wealth and unlimited unscrupulousness—this gave him his power. But he is now found out, and his influence is only for mischief. I expect he will be beaten horse and foot at the next election. I know he is moving heaven and hell to win, but I see in yesterday's paper that your two Dutch M.P.'s who gave evidence before the Committee have already received notice to quit from their constituents. I have formed a very mean opinion of Sprigg when I saw him in London. . . . If you and Milner begin to demonstrate against the Transvaal you will most certainly greatly increase the triumph of the Dutch at the elections, and if Milner is supposed to favour such a policy the place will become too hot for him.

Of course much depends upon the future position of Rhodes. If his authority is re-established nothing will avert a war of races in South Africa. There is a blood feud between him and Kruger—which nothing will assuage. But the political existence of Rhodes depends on the success of Rhodesia. I believe it will end like the South Sea Bubble and Law's Adventure. I can find no one whose opinion is worth having who believes in the gold of Rhodesia. . . .

Rhodes is not really a clever man, or he would not have trusted his fate to Dr. Rutherford Harris and Flora Shaw. On the whole my strong advice to you is to let well alone. For the present at

least things seem to be progressing favourably. An increase of force at this moment will be construed by all parties as a provocation and a menace which will delight some, enrage others and alarm all.

You tell me that Leyds "was disappointed with his interview with the Opposition." You know me well enough to be aware that I was not likely to say anything which would increase the difficulties of the situation. I preached to him moderation and reforms. But at the same time I gave him the assurance that no hostile action was contemplated or would be tolerated in England towards the Government of the Transvaal. I should have thought I was doing a very ill service to South Africa if I had allowed myself to talk of "war with England" in the light-hearted manner of A. Milner. We have quite enough border warfare on our hands in India without courting an additional dose of it in Africa.

Kruger has admitted the obligation to observe the Convention, and he has shown no disposition to violate it. If he does so it is not a "far cry" nowadays to Cape Town, and you can show your teeth in a very few weeks. To do so prematurely would be a great political blunder.

- You remember the days of 1878? What destroyed Beaconsfield after the triumph of Berlin was Lytton and the Afghan War followed by Bartle Frere in S. Africa. Don't let our friend A. M. take up the parable of Bartle Frere.

I offer disinterested counsel. If I wanted (which heaven knows I do not) to be in your place, I should pray that you might follow the Beaconsfield legend.

Go up to the top of a high mountain in Switzerland and ponder the wise words of the prophet.

To this weighty admonition, Chamberlain, writing from Zurich, wrote an equally cordial and equally outspoken reply, for the full text of which I must refer the reader to Mr. Garvin's forthcoming *Life of Chamberlain*. He denied that he proposed to increase the forces in South Africa in any provocative way, defended Sir Alfred Milner against Harcourt's criticism, declared that he (Chamberlain) did not want war, because it would bring no credit and because without it the Transvaal was bound to become a part of a South African Federation. The issue resolved itself into a question of how best to deal with Kruger who, if "not a fool," was an obstinate, opinionated and intensely ignorant and narrow-minded man. On that question he and Harcourt differed. If he (Chamberlain) was a Jingo—

which of course he denied—Harcourt was a peace-at-any-price man and would yield anything sooner than fight. That always led to war. As to Rhodes, he denied that he had praised him except for his past services. His political offences were gigantic, but they were not the sort of thing for which a man would be expelled from his club. I regret that I cannot quote the letter in full, for, taken with Harcourt's, it presents the issue in South Africa with extraordinary clearness and dispassionateness.

The situation there became increasingly confused by the defeat of Rhodes in the election in Cape Colony, and the consequent accession of W. P. Schreiner to the premiership. "The defeat of Rhodes pleases me vastly," wrote Harcourt from Scotland to Lewis Harcourt. "It would have been a real disaster if he had won. I shall write a letter of congratulation to Schreiner presently. He will no doubt be Prime Minister. It is a tremendous rebuff to Joe and what I regret more, to A. Milner, who has made a serious error in backing Rhodes, which I fear will seriously compromise his position. Altogether the Jingoës are having a bad bout of it." Returning to Malwood, he plunged with redoubled energy into his battle with the bishops, and turned a deaf ear to the blandishments of Mr. Morley who had been discussing with Mr. Balfour the question of a Catholic University for Ireland. He had no love for denominational universities, and declined to help the Government. Let Haldane take the lead. "It will be an entertaining bear fight," he said. Mr. Morley found his letter "a trifle less affable than usual." "It must have been the fog which got into my brain as well as into my throat," he replied. "Pray ascribe it to the liver rather than the heart. I confess it did rile me a bit that A. B. [Mr. Balfour] should expect me *tirer ses marrons*. . . . I cannot think that A. B. will touch the Catholic University unless he wishes to have a row. He had better stick to good golf and avoid *bunkers*." His correspondence with Mr. Morley had recovered all its old intimacy and gaiety, and the discussion of many things from Herodotus to the iniquities of Cham-

berlain and the gloom that hung over the world proceeded in an atmosphere of mutual raillery. "Don't take your coat off, but follow my example and put on your dressing-gown," wrote Harcourt when urging Mr. Morley not to break his vows of silence in public on Fashoda. "I take your advice," replied Mr. Morley, "and have ordered my dressing-gown to be newly quilted for a quiet winter. The times become more and more demented." And again, "I would fain promise myself an unruffled sea for what remains of the luckless cruise that you and I have had to sail together," wrote Mr. Morley, to which Harcourt replied, "We are in the same boat, though not always tugging at the same oar." In this spirit of rather despairing jocularitv the two friends approached the incident that was to close Harcourt's official career.



stood for in public policy. He was conscious that Liberalism was being honeycombed with the thing he most loathed, that the country was heading for war, that the Party to whose fortunes his whole career had been attached was breaking in two, and that if a crash came its most influential elements would be against him. "I have long known," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 10), "that the chosen people of the Liberal Press and Party have addicted themselves to strange gods, and that we shall see at least as powerful a contingent of Liberal Jingoism as of Liberal Unionism—Khartum and Fashoda will rally the popular sentiment as much as Trafalgar and Salamanca. The Nile correspondence and the Sirdar will wipe out all the discontent at the Salisbury foreign policy. We shall either see the submission of France which will be popular, or a war with France, which will be more popular still." He was reminded by constant discussions in the Press that the Liberal leadership was still in commission awaiting the return of Lord Rosebery with a more enterprising attitude to the world than that which he represented, and he was aware of the intrigues that were afoot to hasten that happy consummation. From his colleagues on the Front Bench he always claimed to have received the most loyal support, but many of them, and these the most influential among the younger men, were notoriously friendly to a Rosebery leadership. His pride was wounded by the sense that he was supposed to be in competition for a thankless supremacy, and his self-respect by the knowledge that the organizers of the Rosebery movement designed that he, having led the Party in the wilderness, should be superannuated when it came into the promised land. He had made up his mind before the close of the Session of 1898 to end this intolerable situation. Among his colleagues Mr. Morley, his most intimate friend, shared most fully his feeling towards the perplexing problems of external policy. The breach in their friendship was long since healed. Mr. Morley, more than anyone else, had been responsible for the Rosebery premiership, but an entire community of feeling on foreign

policy had brought him decisively back to Harcourt's side, and he was as hostile as Harcourt himself to "the strange gods" to whom so many of the Liberal leaders seemed to be bowing a furtive knee. There is a passage in a letter from Mr. Morley to Harcourt on July 25 which shows that the latter had already opened his mind to him on the subject of retirement from the leadership of the House of Commons. "I do sincerely beg you," wrote Mr. Morley, "not to stir in that other business of which you spoke without giving me the chance of a word with you. Let it go on slumbering—though the provocation is doubtless intolerable."

It went on slumbering through the autumn, until two events awoke it to activity. The first was the intimation that the question of the leadership would be raised at a meeting of the National Liberal Federation at Birmingham. This alone would have given Harcourt the cue for a decisive step. He had no disposition to have his name bandied about at a public meeting as a candidate for a position which, when the time came, could only be filled by the Party in Parliament. The other consideration arose out of a more serious matter. The inevitable collision, which had been foreseen throughout the summer, of the British forces advancing into the Sudan and the French expedition advancing from the French Congo to the upper reaches of the Nile had taken place, and "Fashoda" was on every tongue. The news of the decisive battle of Omdurman was less than a month old when it became known that white men were in possession of Fashoda and had fired on a steamer of the Khalifa's on the Nile. On September 26 there appeared a telegram in the *Daily Telegraph* stating that Kitchener had been up the Nile to Fashoda, had there found Major Marchand in possession, had invited him to retire on the ground that it was Egyptian territory, that Marchand had declined, that thereupon the British and French flags had been hoisted side by side and that the question at issue had been left for decision to the governments in London and Paris.

There followed a period of extreme tension between the two countries, and for a time war seemed imminent. In the prolonged discussions that took place M. Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, took the position that the Egyptian claim had lapsed, and that the French had as much right at Fashoda as anybody else. The British Government took their stand on the ground that the recognition of the French sphere north of Lake Chad had excluded any other Power than Great Britain from the occupation of "any part of the Nile Valley," and upon the statement of Sir E. Grey in 1895 that a French advance into the Nile Valley would be regarded as an unfriendly act. It will be remembered that that statement, made in Harcourt's absence from the House and without his knowledge, had been one of the chief sources of difference between him and some of his colleagues in the Rosebery Government. There came into the controversy also the unfortunate Anglo-Belgian Convention of 1894, which Harcourt had strenuously opposed, and which had practically fallen through. Harcourt's general attitude in the controversy was friendly to the Government. "In this particular case of Fashoda," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 14), "the French Government have really by their previous argument put themselves out of court, and committed the blunder of claiming to occupy by their own right that which they themselves assert to be the continuing possession of Egypt." And in a speech at Aberystwith on October 28 he said :

. . . It has always been the great and patriotic tradition of this country for men of all parties, independent of political differences, in the presence of national difficulties and dangers, to give to the Government of the Queen their support in the maintenance of the rights of the Empire. At a moment such as the present, under a difficulty, especially with reference to the condition of the French Government to-day, I believe, altogether unexampled, such a duty is more than ever, in my opinion, urgent. I do not think I can add with advantage any argument or any statement to those which have been already made. The issues, the great issues, are now in the hands of responsible and capable men, to whom the fortunes of this country are entrusted. The responsibility is a heavy one, and, in my opinion, we should all abstain from language of vulgar

swagger, or of provocation, or of menace, which might embarrass their conduct or precipitate their action. They will, I hope and believe, be guided by the sincere desire, while firmly maintaining the national interests, to seek a peaceful and honourable conclusion of the difficulties with which they have to deal; and, if they do so, I am sure they will receive the sympathy and support of this nation.

But he was privately indignant at the tone of some of the ministers, and especially at that of Chamberlain. "Chamberlain is at his old game of rubbing vitriol into the French sores," he wrote to Mr. Morley (November 17). "I seem to hear a voice from the tomb [Gladstone's] murmuring 'mad and drunk.' His superfluous appeal to Germany, is the very thing to exasperate Russia and incline her to give active support to France, from which she has hitherto held back." It was not Chamberlain's utterances however which disturbed him most. Lord Rosebery had seized the occasion of a meeting of the Surrey Agricultural Association to intervene as being "ministerially and *personally* responsible" for the declaration of Sir Edward Grey in 1895, and had delivered a speech in which he said that "if the nations of the world are under the impression that the ancient spirit of Great Britain is dead, or that her resources are weakened, or her population less determined than ever it was to maintain the rights and the honour of its flag, they make a mistake which can only end in a disastrous conflagration." The speech was in tune with the mood of the hour, and when a little later Kitchener was entertained at the Mansion House Lord Rosebery divided with him the honours of the evening, while Harcourt was listened to with something like impatience.

These circumstances bringing out the fundamental fissure within the Party on foreign policy and recalling the attitude adopted by Lord Rosebery and the Foreign Office in regard to communications with the Leader of the House of Commons in 1895, led Harcourt to the conclusion that the moment had come for the step he had been contemplating. He discussed the matter fully with Mr. Morley, and writing to his sister, Emily, he said, "I write to you what is a professional secret to-day . . . the resolution I have come

to for some time with the entire approbation of Loulou and the rest of my friends that I would bring the Rosebery intrigue to an end by declaring that I will no longer continue the lead of the Liberal Party in the House of Commons, but remain there as an independent member to take my own course. It became necessary to announce this at once as it is proposed to raise the question of leadership at Birmingham next Friday." On December 14 the following letters were published in the Press :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, December 8, 1898.—MY DEAR JOHN MORLEY.—I am informed that discussions are being raised, or proposed to be raised, in reference to the future leadership of the Liberal Party. It seems to be supposed that this is a question upon which I ought to feel a great personal interest and some anxiety. So far as it affects myself, I feel no anxiety on this matter. My record is clear, and my resolution is fixed to undertake no responsibility and to occupy no position the duties of which it is made impossible for me to fulfil. There are people who appear to consider that the office of a leader is one which offers such inducements as would inspire an ambition to be pursued by all means and at any sacrifice. You, at least, are not so unacquainted with the realities of public affairs as to suffer under such a delusion. The protracted labour, the constant anxiety, and the heavy responsibility of that situation are such as no man of sense or honour will undergo, except from a high sentiment of public duty.

For myself, the part that I have played in public life has been governed by a very plain and simple sense of obligation. In the later years of Mr. Gladstone's political life, both in Government and Opposition, he was good enough, with the concurrence of my colleagues, to commission me to render him a necessary, however inadequate, assistance in order to lighten his labours in the burdensome work of the House of Commons and elsewhere. When the time, so disastrous for the Liberal Party, arrived at which he took his final leave as its responsible chief, there were many considerations which would have led me to desire relief from the burdens of office. I determined not to yield to such temptations for two principal reasons : first, because I did not choose that it should be thought that I was governed by personal feeling ; secondly, because in the face of a vast deficit caused by the necessary increase of naval expenditure for national defence I thought it my duty to remain at my post as Chancellor of the Exchequer, in order to establish the public finances upon a just and adequate basis in the Budget of 1894, which was then imminent. The task was not a promising

one in the presence of the powerful opposition by which it was encountered. Nevertheless, I felt it would have been cowardly to shrink from the risks and the labour which it imposed, and I resolved somewhat reluctantly to continue to discharge as leader of the House of Commons such duties as seemed to me most conducive to the interests of the Liberal Party, which for thirty years of parliamentary life it has been my constant object to sustain.

At the meeting of the Party (called jointly by Lord Rosebery and myself) on the retirement of Mr. Gladstone, we set forth at the Foreign Office our entire adherence to the principles and the policy which he had bequeathed to us. The late Government fought together through the Sessions of 1894 and 1895, under circumstances of unexampled difficulty, with a narrow and precarious majority the battle of Liberal principles, not, I am glad to remember, without some signal successes. After the great defeat of 1895, in which you and I suffered in common, there were not wanting again strong temptations to any who desired only their own comfort and freedom from toil and responsibility to abandon a defeated army to its fate. That was not a course which recommended itself to you or to me. We rallied the broken ranks and took our places again in the van of the Liberal fight. Even with our attenuated line we inflicted upon the overwhelming majority of the Government a remarkable defeat on the Education Bill of 1896. Our successes were due to the loyalty and united action of the Liberal Party in support of those who led their forces. It is only when such a spirit prevails that anything can be accomplished by a political party, whether in the days of its good or its evil fortune.

A party rent by sectional disputes and personal interests is one which no man can consent to lead either with credit to himself or advantage to the country. You and my other colleagues know well the desire I have ever felt, and the efforts I have made, to secure unity of action in the promotion of the common cause ; to reconcile differences of opinion where they might arise ; and to consult the sentiments and the feelings of those with whom it was my duty and my satisfaction to act. In this spirit of cordial co-operation, which I gratefully acknowledge, we have ever since the dissolution carried on the work of the Party.

It has been whispered by men who neither know nor care to know the truth that I have allowed personal considerations to influence public action. No man knows better than yourself the falsehood of these unworthy insinuations. If personal proscriptions have been insisted upon, as a ground for refusal of common action in the general cause, they have not proceeded from me. In my opinion such pretensions are intolerable, and, in common with my colleagues, I have always refused to recognize them.

I am not, and I shall not consent, to be a candidate for any contested position. I shall not be party to such a degradation of the

tone of public life in this country. I have been content to the best of my ability in any situation which fell to my lot, to do my duty towards the Party which it has been my pride and my pleasure to serve. If I have arrived at the conclusion that I can best discharge that duty in an independent position in the House of Commons, you will, I feel sure, agree that a disputed leadership beset by distracted sections and conflicting interests is an impossible situation, and a release from vain and onerous obligations will come to me as a welcome relief. I shall be glad if you will make this letter known at once in such manner as you may think fit, in order to remove any misapprehension as to my personal sentiments and position.

Yours very sincerely,

W. V. HARCOURT.

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

57, ELM PARK GARDENS, December 10, 1898.—MY DEAR HARCOURT, —I have read your letter with the concern naturally arising from the gravity of its contents. I cannot feel the smallest surprise that at last you have found it impossible to keep silence in a situation that may well have become intolerable to you. For months past I have often wondered at your steadfast reserve and self-command under the provocation of those "unworthy insinuations" to which you refer, and which, if you had ever thought it worth while, you could at any moment have blown to atoms. •

Apart from considerations of self-respect and personal honour in any individual case, nobody on either side of politics can think it good for the credit of public life in this country, or for the character and repute of its public men, that a situation should be prolonged in which the leadership of what has been, and will be again, a great and powerful Party should be treated in a way so demoralizing both to the leaders and to the led. All who value the traditions that have made English public life the healthiest in the world will be glad that you have determined, so far as you are concerned, that these proceedings shall now come to an end.

Nobody who has any real knowledge of the circumstances either does or can suppose that, at a single point since Mr. Gladstone's retirement in 1894, you were actuated by any other motives than those of genuine public spirit and unselfish zeal for the interests of the Party. If at that critical moment you had declined to go on as leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer none of us would have had any right to complain. It was lucky for the Liberal Party that you did go on. If you had thrown up the Exchequer, as merely personal feeling might not unwarrantably have induced you to do, the country would have lost the most important contribution made to financial legislation for many a long year. The greatest of our legislative successes as a Party and an Administration was your success.

As for events since 1895, the thing speaks for itself. Anybody who knows party history, and who also knows the condition of our Party after the election three years and a half ago, will agree that no leader of Opposition—not Peel after 1832, nor Mr. Disraeli in 1848, and onwards—ever undertook a more discouraging and difficult task than was laid upon you in 1895. The labour and the strain of such a post in such circumstances can only be known to those who have lived at close quarters to it. And there is in my mind something odious—I can find no other word—in telling a man who has strenuously faced all this, who has stuck manfully to the ship instead of keeping snug in harbour because seas were rough and skies dark, that his position in his party is to be incessantly made matter of formal contest and personal challenge. I remember that when you surrendered the leadership of the House before the elections of 1895 your last words in that capacity were something about its being the chief ambition of every man who has taken part in the noble conflicts of Parliamentary life, whether in majority or minority, to stand well in the House of Commons. We who sit there can see for ourselves how, leader of a minority as you are, you stand with both sides of the present House, politically hostile as the majority in it may be.

I know well enough, as you say, that there have been whispers about your singling out this personage or that as men with whom you would not co-operate. I also know how baseless these stories are; how precisely the reverse of the truth they are; how certain it is to anybody in accurate possession of the facts that it was not from you, at any rate, that attempts at proscription, as you call it, have proceeded. You and I have not always agreed in every point of tactics or of policy since you have been the working leader of the Liberal Party. For Government and Opposition alike the times have been difficult and perplexing, and diversity of view on sudden issues was not on either side of the House unnatural. But I am confident that every colleague we have, who has shared our Party counsels since the disaster of 1895, will join me in recognizing the patience, the persistency, and the skill with which you have laboured to reconcile such differences of opinion as arose and to promote unity of action among us.

We are now asked to dismiss all this from our minds, for no other reason than that I know of than that you have not been able to work political miracles and to achieve party impossibilities. On the contrary, I for one feel bound to say how entirely I sympathize with the feelings that have drawn this letter from you. It has doubtless not been written without long and careful deliberation, and I believe that I shall be doing what you desire in making it public without unnecessary delay.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN MORLEY.



The announcement provided a political sensation of the first magnitude, and filled the newspapers for many days with speculation and controversy over the question of the leadership and the future of the Liberal Party. It was realized that behind the personal issue there was the much more serious question of the attitude of the Party towards foreign affairs, and especially in regard to the smouldering fire in South Africa. A proposal was made at the meeting of the Council of the National Liberal Federation that Harcourt should be asked to reconsider his decision, but this was very properly vetoed on the ground that the question of leadership was in the province of the representatives of the Party in Parliament. The general feeling among Liberals in the country was with Harcourt, and the *Manchester Guardian* expressed the view of the rank and file when it said, "The bulk of the Party knows nothing and cares nothing for personal intrigues, but it knows a strong man when it sees him, and if Sir William Harcourt still cares to lead, we believe the vast majority of the Party will stand by him." But in the Liberal Press in London Lord Rosebery and his policy had strong endorsement. The *Daily Chronicle*, under Mr. Massingham, it is true, had modified its attitude towards him in the light of the Imperialist tendencies of which he was the centre; but the *Westminster Gazette* and the *Daily News* were pro-Rosebery, the latter strenuously so. The new editor of the *Daily News*, E. T. Cook, had made that journal indeed the most powerful intellectual force on the side of the policy which Chamberlain, Rhodes and Sir Alfred Milner were pursuing in South Africa, and his hostility to Harcourt was quite frank and undisguised. "I am delighted to have unmasked the batteries of the *Daily News* and shown them up in their true light," Harcourt wrote to Mr. Morley in reference to the article on his resignation. "They hoped to lie low and wear me out in time. They are evidently well acquainted with the transactions of August 1895 (the proscription of Harcourt by Lord Rosebery), and fear their publication, which I expect will surely come about? . . . Now that the shot

is fired we may well sit quiet and look on at the results. I have shaken off the dust and shall turn to the Bishops."

Harcourt was deluged with letters from his colleagues in Parliament and his admirers in the country, not least of all from his old officials at the Treasury. Francis Mowatt deplored that he could no longer look for another "Harcourt time" at the Treasury—"a time I look back to with the greatest admiration for the work done, and, if I may say so, with the most sincere respect and friendship for the man who did it. And you go at a time when fair trade, imperialism, bimetallism and God knows what other bogeys have their hands on the Treasury back-door handles." Harcourt was entirely satisfied with the result of the explosion. It had brought the Liberal Party face to face with the issue that was undermining its solidarity. Writing to Mr. Morley (December 21), he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

... The article in Tuesday's *Daily Chronicle* is very significant. Friend Massingham has discovered that, as the gentleman in the Bigelow Papers says, the London editors "don't know everything down in Judee," and that the opinion of the Provinces is not for, but against, imperialism. I think the line we should take is adherence to the established tradition of the Liberal Party and insist that those who want Jingoism had better go to the right shop and point out the absurdity of our attempting to go one better than Chamberlain. . . .

My table is covered this morning with applications to publish my forthcoming work *The Life of Lord Bolingbroke* ! That masterpiece of literature is not at present in an advanced state. I might have some satisfaction in gibbeting the greatest scoundrel who ever adorned political life in this country, but I am withheld by a certain sense of shame at the reflection that an ancestor of mine was one of the triumvirate whose transactions are amongst the least creditable in the records of English statesmanship. It is not satisfactory to remember that they were the peace party of that day. . . .

"If we manage well," replied Mr. Morley (December 21), "we ought to give Liberal Jingoism its quietus for a long time to come, but it will need skill and wariness." Two comments on his resignation gave Harcourt especial pleasure, one, that of Sir Edward Grey, and the other, that of Mr.

Balfour at Edinburgh. Speaking of the latter's "generous speech," he said, writing to Mr. Morley, "After all there is some advantage in being a gentleman and living with them! And Balfour is one of the rare men who make public life tolerable and even respectable." Writing on the general effect of the blow on the morning after, he said to Lewis Harcourt:

*Harcourt to his son, L. V. Harcourt.*

MALWOOD, LYNTHURST, December 14, 1898.—I was very glad to get your telegram this morning and to know that you are well satisfied as I am with the result of the torpedo. The shot has gone home between wind and water. The enemy has been taken by surprise and defeated just at the moment when they believed their game was safe. Nothing could have been better planned, better timed or better organized. Moltke could not have surpassed the strategy. But, my darling, I owe the chief part of it as always to your devotion and capacity. Tell Molly [Loulou had just become engaged to Miss Burns, the present Viscountess Harcourt] you are as good at business and politics as you are at love—and not so long in bringing off events.

You will see from J. M.'s letter that Asquith is rather in the dumps, as is not unnatural, as he knows what may be in store for him. I have written him a soothing letter.

Dear old Kimberley is very good, and so is the philosopher C.-B. You will observe that they and Bryce express no surprise.

Tweedmouth and Spencer for different reasons most discomposed. . . .

I feel very jolly as a free man—and shall watch the play from my stage box with much amusement. . . .

"To have found Loulou a wife and got rid of your faithless mistress [politics] in one month is very good work," wrote Mr. Reginald Brett [Lord Esher]. It would be difficult to say which fact contributed most to Harcourt's good humour, which bubbled over in all his letters at this time. "We are very happy here [Malwood] this Christmas with our two boys well and flourishing—rejoicing in my freedom and Loulou's slavery," he wrote to James. "He [Loulou] will not allow me the honourable retirement which you offer [James had suggested that he should go to the House of Lords], as he looks forward like a young Hannibal to replace Hamilcar in the House of Commons."

The sequel to Harcourt's resignation came in the following January when Mr. Morley followed his example and announced the close of his official association with the Party. In a speech at Brechin he said, "I will not go about the country saying fine things or listening to fine things about Mr. Gladstone, and at the same time sponging off the slate all the lessons that Mr. Gladstone taught us and all the lessons that he set." The split in the Liberal Party was complete, and events were soon to embitter it by the sharp challenge of war.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE BATTLE WITH THE BISHOPS

The Benefices Bill—Correspondence with Creighton—Letter to  
" *The Times*—Practices of Ritualism—The true Erastian principle.

I MUST break the narrative of events at this stage to glance at a controversy in which Harcourt was the chief figure, and which continued from 1898 to 1900. No man ever loved an argument more or pursued it with more relentless enthusiasm than he did. He enjoyed it for its own sake, much as a dog enjoys a bone, not necessarily with the hope of extracting any nourishment from it, but for the pleasure of the exercise. In his letters to Mr. Morley while he was contemplating resignation he had pictured himself as Diocletian among his cabbages at Malwood, deaf to the temptations of the great world. He said that he would make "quite a spectacle Diocletian." His passion for Malwood and the gardens at Malwood was sincere enough, and he was never tired of singing the praises, not of his cabbages, but of his roses and his flowers, and stopping to say, as he walked round his garden borders with a friend, "What could be more enjoyable?" But these things were only the garnishing of his life, and he loved the battlefield too much to resist the appeal of Maximian to take a part in it, if not in the centre of the fight then on its fringes, if not as leader then as a free lance. And whatever the subject that engaged him, however apparently remote from the preoccupations of the public, the heartiness with which he flung himself into the conflict and the resounding emphasis of his blows made him the centre of the fray. If the subject was an indifferent subject, at least the fight was a good fight.

So it was in the controversy to which during these years he brought all his powerful gifts of argument and raillery and indignation. It is not necessary that I should enter at great length into his prolonged battle with the bishops. The subject with which it dealt has lost much of its reality to-day, and it does not belong to the main current of Harcourt's public life. The verdict of events has gone against him. Writing to him from Toronto, Goldwin Smith, his old colleague of forty years before, said (March 7, 1899), "A letter from me will come to you like a voice from the cemetery of the *Saturday Review*. I have been reading your letters to *The Times*. Of course you have entirely the best of it. The poor Bishops are creeping into holes to get out of the thunder." But though he won the argument—as he usually did—it cannot be said that he won the battle. Ritualism has established itself within the Anglican Church beyond any apparent likelihood of serious challenge. Harcourt's fight for the pure milk of Erastianism was a rearguard engagement, and the issue on which he fought has ceased to occupy the public mind.

But to Harcourt it was an issue of the first moment. "My creed in Church and State," he told Creighton, the Bishop of London, "is that of an old Whig and thoroughly consistent Protestant." He carried his constitutional doctrine into the realm of religion as remorselessly as he applied it to the proceedings of the Treasury. The national Church was to him as much a creation of Parliament as the Local Government Board, and he regarded any breach of the law within the Church with the same indignation as he would have felt at the disobedience of an under-secretary at the Admiralty or the Home Office. Liberty of opinion and freedom of conscience were cardinal articles of his creed, and though he was as sound a Church of England man as his grandfather, the Archbishop, had been, he had unqualified tolerance for Catholics, Dissenters, Jews or heretics. But within the Church he was the uncompromising guardian of the law, and would allow no quarter to those who trifled with its stern commandments. If men did not approve

of the law they had liberty to leave the Church and to worship under other sanctions, but so long as they remained in it, accepted its preferments and subscribed to its articles they must observe the statutory regulations laid down by Parliament. This had been his unchanging attitude throughout life. It formed a part of that eighteenth-century outlook which he was always proud to profess, whether in regard to politics, religion or matters of taste. His public career had opened in the midst of the "No Popery" agitation which followed the Oxford movement, and his first disagreement with Gladstone had been over the question of discipline in the Church. He had shared Disraeli's attitude to the "mass in masquerade," but in a spirit widely different from Disraeli's levity. To Disraeli one form of Christianity was probably as amusing as another, for at heart he was a Jew of the circumcision, but Harcourt's roots were deep in English thought and tradition, and loyalty to constitutional practice was a part of his religion.

It was natural, therefore, that with the revival of the agitation against the extension of ritualistic practices within the Church, Harcourt, contemplating a period of "more freedom and less responsibility," should decide that the rural occupations of Diocletian should be varied by a defence of the institution he loved against the foes within who seemed to be undermining its foundations. The crusade arose out of the Benefices Bill, which was itself a response to the agitation against the inroads which the High Anglicans of the English Church Union were making into the Protestant traditions of the Established Church. Harcourt's cardinal proposition in the discussions on the Bill was that there was an important and active party in the Church of England which was striving to bring public worship as close as possible to the usages and interpretations of the Church of Rome without admitting the papal authority, and he demanded the enforcement by the bishops of literal compliance with every jot and tittle of what was laid down in the Book of Common Prayer—in other words the strict enforcement of the Act of Uniformity. He carried the

controversy outside Parliament into the columns of *The Times*, to which he wrote a long series of letters, not quite so voluminous as those of "Historicus," but as full of precedents and dialectic, in defence of the position that the bishops were the depositaries of the law in the sense that their duty was to see that it was observed, but that their authority was derived from the Statute and that they had not the power to vary the Statute.

Here he was fundamentally at issue with a large number of persons who agreed with him in deprecating the use of confession, the reservation of the Sacrament, the recitation of prayers for the dead and the observance of other ceremonies which had been in use before the Reformation but had not been included in the Book of Common Prayer. In some of these matters, notably the use of confession, which is expressly permitted under certain circumstances in the office of Holy Communion, he went even further than moderate Churchmen were prepared to go. They argued with much show of reason that the absolute insistence on the rubric of the Book of Common Prayer, with the minimum of elasticity of interpretation, would be at least as distasteful to the "Protestant" wing of the Church of England as to the "Catholic" wing. But there was undoubtedly much anxiety as to the wisdom of permitting the approximation of the services of the Church of England to those of the Roman Catholic Church.

But Harcourt's contention of the narrow limits of the authority of the bishops, and his theory of the derivation of their powers from the Statute, ignored the authority which they held in the minds of devout Churchmen, the authority derived from their ordination and from their place in the whole of the Christian Church, which is, as Harcourt's opponents pointed out, an old institution dating from before the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Harcourt demanded that there should be uniformity in the Church, and declared that the Prayer Book itself had been drawn up with the intention of enforcing such uniformity.

A bishop, said Harcourt, had no right to allow or to



propose the use of any service outside those prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer except under certain conditions. Since this rule presented some difficulty in the matter of services which were necessary and did not conflict with the spirit of the Book of Common Prayer the Act of Uniformity of 1872 made special provision for the use of shortened services, for special services for special occasions, and for additional services on Sundays and holy days. These special services were regulated by the condition that they should not contain anything which was not in Holy Scripture or in the Book of Common Prayer. Now the Archbishop of Canterbury had interpreted this as meaning that nothing must be included which was not "parallel with the Book of Common Prayer"—an interpretation which to Harcourt seemed to leave the door open to the invasion of the Ritualists.

From this starting-point Harcourt advanced to an examination of the differences between the contending factions—the Confessional, the Holy Communion, the Reservation, of the Sacrament, the use of incense, and so on. Referring to the Reservation of the Sacrament and the solitary celebration of the Mass without communicants, he said :

. . . This was no question of mere ceremony or ritual. It went to the root of the whole sacramental doctrine on which the English Reformation hinged, and which opened the chasm which irrevocably divides the Protestant Church of England from the Church of Rome. It is the outward and visible sign of the *opus operatum* of the sacrificing priest—the most potent engine of priestcraft—as distinguished from the faithful communion of the congregation which is the cornerstone of the Protestantism of the English Church.

His claim was that the bishops' veto on prosecutions, which, in his opinion, had served as a shield for the practices of the "law breakers," should go, and the laity should have the power to intervene freely to defend the ecclesiastical law. The Church of England was not a priestly institution, but the Church of the laity, based on parliamentary sanctions and since the bishops had failed to secure obedience to the Act of Uniformity the task should devolve on the public.

Creighton, replying to Harcourt in the discussion of Church discipline in the House of Lords (February 9, 1899), asked :

What really is the state of things to which Sir William Harcourt wishes to go back ? What is it that he is so anxious to revive ? Is it the old days of Elizabeth and the old Tudor conception of what a bishop's function is—that he should be the prosecuting officer on behalf of the police, benevolent and kindly, but none the less the policeman established by the State for the purpose of dealing with the clergy who transgress by a hair's breadth the narrow line of uniformity then laid down ? . . . The bishops . . . have not tried to go beyond the limits of that common sense, and they have not ventured to fall back upon the maxims of ecclesiastical autocracy with which your lordships would have been the first to twit them if they had attempted to act upon them. . . .

Harcourt did not want prosecution, but deprivation, and showed from a correspondence with Sir F. Jeune, who had acted for the Protestants in the Maconochie case, that that procedure was effective. It would have stamped out the law-breaking practices, but for the decision of the bishops to shut the gates of the law. He did not want to make martyrs, but he did want to exclude from the Church those who sought to subvert it to Romish practices.

Apart from his letters to the Press<sup>1</sup> and his activities in Parliament, Harcourt carried on an enormous private correspondence with the Bishop of Winchester (the present Archbishop of Canterbury), with Creighton (Bishop of London) and with other dignitaries of the Church. The discussions with Creighton were not without humour. Thus, writing to Harcourt (August 24, 1900), Creighton, maintaining that prosecution would hinder rather than promote order in the Church, said :

*The Bishop of London to Harcourt.*

. . . With this explanation I will venture one or two remarks about Church matters—simply because you are obviously interested in them and it is natural that you should deal with them as you would with any corresponding political question. But bishops cannot do so. They are dealing with tendencies of thought, which require

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<sup>1</sup> *Lawlessness in the National Church*. Reprinted from *The Times*. Macmillan, 1899.

gentle handling. If speculation has taken a wrong turn it cannot be diverted all at once by heroic measures. Men who have made a mistake, who have gone further than they intended, can easily be stratified into obstinacy, but can only gradually be persuaded to withdraw from a position which has to be proved to be untenable. You object to the bishops that they do not deliver frontal attacks. Their answer is—This is not the way to victory.

. . . There are only two ways of dealing with religious opinions—that of Gamaliel and that of the Inquisition. I always regard Gamaliel as the first exponent of Liberal opinions. This is why I have ventured to trouble you with this letter. We have to put up with a great deal in consequence of the English conception of liberty of opinion. We have to take it all round, in things we like and in things we don't like. Bishops are not autocrats; for polemical purposes it is convenient to treat them as such. The horrible principles of constitutional government have, unfortunately affected the Church in England. I for one am glad of it.

In the course of his reply, Harcourt said :

. . . Instead of the examples of the fathers of the English constitution you offer me Gamaliel as the "first exponent of Liberal principles." There is some ambiguity in the scriptural account of the doctrine and the results of the teaching of this eminent Professor. His young disciple Saul tells us that he sat at his feet and was "taught according to the perfect manner of the law," with the result that he persecuted them "even unto death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women," and it required a miracle to convert Paul from the lessons of this "first exponent of Liberal principles." But as you probably refer to another passage (Acts v. 34), when that "doctor of the law" advised the people not to slay Peter and the other Apostles, his moderate counsel seems to have succeeded in repressing their bloodthirsty counsels easily enough, especially as Peter and the other Apostles were not incumbents of the Jewish Church, but simple Nonconformist fishermen entitled to the freedom of their own speculation. If they had been priests in the Jewish establishment Gamaliel might perhaps have reminded them of the fate which overtook the "liberal principles" of the Primate Eli. However, for my part I go further in the way of Liberalism than Gamaliel, by whose advice the people were content to "beat Peter and let him go." I would stop short of the beating even of the successor of Peter's Chair, but I would certainly let his followers go or even make them go out of the offices which they disloyally hold. But are you sure that the policy you advocate is not rather that of another distinguished scriptural character who was not a professor but a judge, and who cared for none of these things but "drove" the complainants "from the judgment seat." . . .

The correspondence with Dr. Davidson had a less lively character. It was of enormous length, and was conducted on both sides with good temper and a large measure of agreement, though the Bishop of Winchester showed with much force the difficulty of applying the principle of uniformity to modern conditions and expanding needs. Harcourt's earlier letters to *The Times* on the subject were published in book form, and formed the basis of the Protestant case during the continuance of the agitation. The effect of the crusade was limited. Harcourt failed in his attempt to get up a popular demand for drastic methods against the offending clergyman who should speak a word that was not in "the schedule of the Statute" (his description of the Book of Common Prayer); but he admittedly strengthened the reassertion of the law, checked, if only temporarily, the growth of ritualistic practices, and secured a larger measure of obedience from the clergy. But seen across the intervening space of years, it is undeniable that Harcourt's prodigious polemics were in vain. They were in vain because his Erastianism refused to apply the only remedy that could meet the case—the remedy of freeing the Church from the dead hand of the State. The lesson of the controversy was not the wisdom of attempting to keep the Established Church within the strait-waistcoat of sixteenth-century formularies; nor the practicability of remodelling the Prayer Book to cover the comprehensiveness of the modern Church and all the varieties of its development. The lesson that remained, for Ritualists and Protestants alike, was the necessity of releasing the Church from parliamentary control and leaving it to function, free and unencumbered, in the realm of spiritual ideas.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE SHADOW OF WAR

Campbell-Bannerman as leader—A holiday in Rome—Return to the House—Criticism of Hicks-Beach's Budget—Great reception in the House—A speech by Lord Rosebery—Harcourt on Little Englanders—The Milner-Kruger negotiations—Harcourt's silence—Mr. Morley at Arbroath—Harcourt speaks out—Party cross-currents—"Paramountcy" in South Africa—Lewis Harcourt's marriage.

MEANWHILE, events in the political field were moving with gathering momentum. The crisis within the Liberal Party had reached the stage of open rupture between the two schools. Mr. Morley's resignation, following upon that of Harcourt, had made Imperialism the cardinal issue before the Party, and the immediate struggle turned upon the succession to the leadership in the House of Commons. Many of the Liberals in the House were anxious to call Harcourt back and to form a new party; but neither Harcourt nor Mr. Morley was disposed to take this course. "I think with downright horror of what another Session would have been on the old terms," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (January 23), "and you have at least as many reasons as I have, and more, for satisfaction at what has been done." Harcourt indicated the finality of his decision by leaving England for a long holiday in Italy. Three names were discussed in connection with the leadership of the Party in the House of Commons, those of Mr. Asquith, H. H. Fowler, and Campbell-Bannerman; but before the Liberal members met at the Reform Club on February 6 the first two names had been withdrawn, and the choice fell upon Campbell-Bannerman.

The first business of the meeting was to pass a vote in recognition of the services rendered by Harcourt to the Liberal Party, and there was a struggle over the proposal to include in it a declaration of "continued confidence" in him. This would have made the rupture between the two camps final, and the vote was confined to less challenging terms. After the meeting had elected Campbell-Bannerman to succeed Harcourt, the new leader paid a generous tribute to his predecessor, in the course of which he said, "Sir William Harcourt's commanding personality, his great knowledge of affairs, his keen political perception, his powers of debate, the strenuous energy of his onslaught on a political opponent, made him as a political combatant a man with few equals; and the deplorable loss of such a man from the head of the Party—from our head—is one which we cannot fully expect to make good." Writing to Harcourt about the meeting, Mr. Morley said:

*Mr. Morley to Harcourt.*

• 57, ELM PARK GARDENS, February 8, 1899.—So far as I can gather, the meeting at the Reform was a flat affair—everybody being afraid of an open quarrel. J. E. Ellis and Scott both said to me that it was *undoubtedly* Harcourtian in sentiment. Everybody confesses to me that if you could have been recalled, you would have been hailed with universal acclamation—like Napoleon when he landed pretty near the spot where you will receive this. . . .

The insertion of the "confidence" was much opposed before the meeting by Tom Ellis on behalf of the leaders!!!! Now I wonder why?

The House was very good-humoured yesterday. C.-B. was very clever—easy, amusing—and a success, as we knew he would be. His passage on the retention of the Sudan, etc., was first-rate. But of course it was dead in the teeth of *all* that has been said by Rosebery, Grey and Asquith. . . . Our colleagues greeted me civilly enough in the lobby, and Grey went out of his way, like the good fellow he is, to talk on the old terms. . . .

"The deliverance from Westminster is blissful," wrote Harcourt to Labouchere. Apart from giving Creighton "an Ahab for his Elijah," he was devoting himself entirely to the delights of Rome. Italy he had visited off and on for fifty years, and no country outside his own held so high a

place in his affections ; but this was the first occasion on which he had been to Rome, and he revelled in an experience which appealed to the passion for history which was one of the most enduring of his intellectual interests. Writing to Mr. Morley, he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

HOTEL ROYAL, ROME, *February 25, 1899.*— . . . Cato did not learn Greek till he was past seventy, and I have reserved Rome for a similar maturity. I seemed to know it all by heart before I came, and it is as entrancing in the reality as in the imagination. I did not expect to admire St. Peter's and therefore I was not disappointed. It seems to have no merit but bigness—which is not the most admirable of qualities. It appeared to me cold and garish. I have never been much of a Michael Angelo man, he has too much muscle and too little beauty, and therefore the Sistine Chapel did not impress me greatly. The Raphaels of the Stanze are lovely but like old beauties gone in the complexion, and the arabesques of the Loggie have altogether perished. But the real old Rome entrances me, the Capitol, the Forum and the Palatine are “ all my fancy painted,” and the beautiful Church of the Ara Coeli, the Statue Galleries of the Capitol and the Vatican are beyond all praise. It makes one feel that after all there was some use in spending the best years of one's life in the study of the people who are capable of such creations. The Coliseum has been dreadfully spoiled by the scraping and the repairs. I have now been here five days and taken a superficial glance at the main objects including the Appian Way, with a beautiful drive in the direction of Frascati. And I shall now settle down to a more accurate study of the things I most care about. I have not yet kissed the Pope's toe, but hope to see him celebrate the anniversary of his coronation in the Sistine Chapel next week. . . .

While he was “ settling down to a more accurate study ” of the things he cared about in Rome, the situation was developing at Westminster. There was a vote on the Sudan which brought the cleavage between the two sections of the Liberal Party on to the floor of the House, and incidentally placed the new leader definitely on the side of the anti-Imperialists. Sir Edward Grey had delivered a speech which was regarded by the Liberals as “ very Jingo.” “ Then C.B. spoke,” wrote Labouchere in describing the scene to Harcourt. “ Up to the end we all expected that he would vote with the Government. I think that he hardly knew himself what he meant to do. We vigorously

cheered all allusions on our side, and there was a dead silence on our side and cheers on the other when he went against us. . . . The division was really better than it appeared, for on Friday many leave town." <sup>1</sup> The new leader was "generally beaten in debate by Balfour," and the Liberals did not like this; but on the other hand he was moving in his steady, imperturbable way to the side of the anti-Imperialists, and Harcourt was well pleased with the reports that reached him of the tendencies within the Party and of the attitude of his successor. "I am well pleased at the reaction which the secession of Morley and myself has brought about," he wrote Labouchere from Rome (March 12). "It has reversed the wheels which were running down a steep place. There is uncommonly little now heard of the Rosebery-cum-Grey-cum-Fowler gospel." And to his sister he wrote at the close of a panegyric on Rome, "I am highly satisfied with the Harcourt-Morley show which has routed the Liberal Jingo party." He looked to the serious financial situation to "open folks' eyes" to the meaning of a policy of adventure. The great surplus he had left behind him at the Treasury had disappeared, and there was a prospective deficit of five millions in spite of the fact that the death duties had already revealed a productive power beyond his most extravagant expectations. He decided to make his reappearance in the House in time to resume, as a private member, his favourite rôle

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Harcourt describing this memorable debate Mr. Morley said (February 24):

*Grey.* He never spoke better in his life. Made the case for the Government better by far than any of them could have done. Much cheered by them. Then Labouchere *more suo* on which I need waste no words.

*Then C.-B.* Nobody knew on the bench what he would do. He said to somebody that he should not make up his mind until he rose. We listened for a quarter of an hour, without an idea which way he would go. I made sure he would go with Grey. No, he came with me!! Immense sensation. One of the most dramatic things I have ever seen. A. J. B. said to me afterwards—"Could not have been worse done. He ought to have taken a line firmly and strongly in his speech, if he was going to vote with you." Quite true.



as the champion of public economy. "I am making preparations for departure from this glorious place," he wrote to Mr. Morley from Rome (April 1), "where I have spent I think six weeks of the happiest time of ~~my~~ life." He had not been able wholly to escape politics, for the Italian politicians, complaining that England had betrayed the interests of Italy to France in the hinterland of Tripoli, came and poured forth their woes to him. "Baron Franchetti attacked me so fiercely at dinner and declared that Italy would cast England off," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "that I expressed my regret, and added that '*Inghilterra fara da se*,' a mot which has gone round Rome."

## II

Harcourt's return was well timed, for the Budget, with its enormous increase of expenditure, its proposals for new taxation and its suspension of the sinking fund, created a bad impression on the public mind, and gave special significance to his reappearance. The House was crowded when he entered it on April 13, and his presence was the occasion of a remarkable demonstration. "One personality and one alone dominated the House to-night," says a contemporary record.<sup>1</sup> "It was that of Sir William Harcourt. Even the introduction of the Budget failed to eclipse as an event of interest the return of the distinguished wanderer. It was for the reappearance of Sir William Harcourt that the House was crowded during prayers, for him that members craned their necks to catch a first glimpse of the stately form, for him, too, that the most resonant cheer of the night rang forth when, after a period of nervous expectancy, he at length came in and quietly took his seat." He passed by the Front Opposition Bench and took his place in the next seat but one from the end of the bench beside Mr. Morley, with whom he exchanged warm greetings amid the cheers of the House. "This," continues the record, "was only the first stage in the welcome of Sir William. One

<sup>1</sup> *Liverpool Daily Post*, April 14, 1899.

ex-minister after another pressed forward to shake him by the hand, and then to the delight of members, all of whom were watching the curious scene like spectators at a play, Mr. Chamberlain tripped nimbly across the floor, squatted on the gangway steps by the side of Mr. Morley, and stretching over in front of that gentleman, seized Sir William Harcourt's hand and gave it quite a demonstrative squeeze." After the introduction of the Budget he rose when the House was empty, and at the news of his rising all the benches suddenly overflowed with members. His speech was brief, but impromptu and therefore in his best vein. Speaking of the suspension of the sinking fund, he said, "The Government have gone in for a policy of blood and glory, and now they want to bilk the bill." Sheridan once remarked that the worst of all possible courses was to muddle away your income by paying your debts. "That," he said, "seems to be the opinion of Her Majesty's Government." In this gay, rattling mood he raked the Ministry fore and aft, and at the close was again the centre of a remarkable demonstration. "Altogether it was quite a Harcourt night," says the description from which I have quoted. "I had a grand reception on my return to the House of Commons on Thursday last from *both* sides, and my attack on the Budget in a ten-minute speech was a great success," he wrote to his wife.

A week later, when he resumed the attack in a considered speech, he surprised and delighted the House by his evidence of recovered power. "He seems to have gained twenty golden years back from all-devouring time." (I quote from the description of the speech in the *Daily Chronicle* of April 21.) "It was the best possible 'Harcourtese'—the easy, familiar dressing of a complex financial argument, the ready aptness of quotations, the swift passing of the interrupter, the homely, and yet deadly thrust. The House knows that style of old—there is no letter of that alphabet that they have not spelled. They enjoy it like men returning to an old vintage—who have strayed into a vineyard when they thought to find a desert. The House

roared with laughter on all sides—the Liberals shouted with joy. But the Government grew more restless as the attack developed and the assault grew fiercer; for it was the most deadly criticism of the Session. It ~~was~~, of course, all aimed at the sinking-fund raid, and the arguments used for it. The Chancellor must be sorry he spoke; for every argument was turned against him with fatal precision. Sir Michael had argued that he reduced the fund to make the rest safer. If that is so, said Sir William, your argument applies to the whole. ‘Strike off three millions more, and then the three millions left will be perfectly safe; leave none, and it will be absolutely secure.’ ‘It is the case of the artichoke—leaf by leaf.’ ‘The White Man’s burden is—the suspension of the sinking fund.’ ‘We had our faults, but we were incapable of your financial poltroonery.’ ‘It is an ignominious Budget.’ Let these be some specimens culled from a fine speech—the finest speech that Sir William Harcourt has made for many years, and one that will set him back in the public eye and regard as the foremost living parliamentarian.”

It is not necessary to pursue the fight over the Budget through its various stages; it is enough to say that the formidable attack which Harcourt conducted left, on the one hand, the Government substantially weakened and, on the other, the anti-Imperialist Liberals in a markedly improved position as far as the Party outlook was concerned. It was obvious that Harcourt had not returned with the intention of becoming “a respectable Diocletian” among his cabbages. He had renounced the leadership at an age and in circumstances which practically precluded the idea of a resumption of it; but the fact that he was no longer personally involved strengthened his influence in a matter which still engaged his mind. He was resolved that the Party should not fall under the sway of the Liberal Imperialists, and he threw all his weight into the scale on the side of Campbell-Bannerman. To the Liberal Imperialists the leadership of Campbell-Bannerman was only a temporary episode which would fill up a tiresome interval before the

return of Lord Rosebery to supremacy in the counsels of the Party. It was Campbell-Bannerman's good or evil fortune always to be underrated by clever people. They mistook his character and they mistook his understanding. They regarded him as a genial, good-natured, but simple-minded man, whom circumstances had pitchforked into an eminence for which he was entirely unfitted. It took years for them to discover that behind that plain and unpretentious exterior there dwelt, as in the case of Lincoln, one of the firmest wills, one of the most sagacious minds, and one of the noblest and most disinterested characters that have appeared in the long record of British politics. Harcourt had never been under any misapprehension as to the real qualities of Campbell-Bannerman, and he knew perhaps better than anyone else the strength of his anti-Imperialist convictions. He was content to have so stout a figure, blocking the path to a Rosebery revival, the prevention of which was now his principal motive in politics.

The issue between the two camps became intensified as the summer advanced, and open hostilities were declared by Lord Rosebery when, in a speech at the City Liberal Club on May 5, he urged the formation of a new party which would embody all the elements that existed before 1886 and that would give a prominent place to "the factor of the larger patriotism that I have called Imperialism."<sup>1</sup> He emphasized his antagonism to the "Little Englanders" by attacking Mr. Morley's reported attitude—based on the incident of the Mahdi's head—to the vote to Lord Kitchener which, he said, he did not believe, "because it seems to me so incredible." Next day at a meeting of the Welsh parliamentary party Harcourt retaliated in strong terms. What Lord Rosebery was asking for was the wiping out of the

<sup>1</sup> Wilfrid Lawson, the "Lobby Laureate," enlivened the controversy with some lines in which he said :

I gather it is Rosebery's creed  
That larger patriots we need

Harcourt appears on casual view  
The *larger* patriot of the two.

Radical programme—Welsh disestablishment, land reform, temperance reform and the question of the veto of the House of Lords. "All this came from one who was one of the principal colleagues of Mr. Gladstone, one who was a party to all of that which it was now sought to obliterate." From this he passed to a eulogy of Campbell-Bannerman, declaring that what they wanted in a leader was a man who said to his troops, "Go forward," and not one who was prepared to invite them to the rear. If the Liberal Party allowed itself to be destroyed by such counsels as he had referred to it would deserve to be destroyed. Lord Rosebery replied with a gibe about a party disheartened "by a superfluity of retired leaders," "disembodied spirits" who hovered over the scene, while Mr. Morley retorted with his famous description of Lord Rosebery as "a dark horse in a loose box." "Bravo Bravissimo!" wrote Harcourt. "Nothing could be better. I shall only have to follow *haud passibus æquis*. The 'dark horse in a loose box' will be immortal." He followed with a speech (May 31) in West Monmouthshire, in which, referring to the now all-absorbing topic of Little Englandism and Imperialism, he said :

. . . What is this Imperialism which, in the slang of the day, is paraded as the highest form of patriotism? I laugh sometimes when I hear myself and others denounced as "Little Englanders." I confess I did not know that there was a "Little England" to belong to. I always thought that England was the greatest, the most extensive, the most powerful, the most famous nation in the world; that it was one of which any man might be proud to be a citizen and have no cause to be dissatisfied. (Cheers.) Little England, forsooth! Where is it? If I desire (which I do not) to be a Little Englander, I must cease to be a British citizen, because being a British citizen I am necessarily a Great Englander, a citizen of a great Empire. (Cheers.) . . .

But what does that Imperialism you hear so much about mean? If it means pursuing a policy which is the wisest and best for that great Empire to which we belong, of course we are all Imperialists in that sense. But then remains the practical question—what is the policy of Imperialism? It is a policy which has its first regard to the consolidation of the vast dominions, the countless millions, and the varied interests which compose our unequalled Empire, the development of their resources, the lightening of their burdens,

the fostering of their natural growth, the relief of distress within it, and the raising of the standard of all sorts and conditions of men who are the subjects of the Queen. That is Imperialism as I understand it. That is a policy which makes the Empire great and keeps it so.

There is another and exactly opposite view of imperial policy. It is to postpone and subordinate all these objects to vanity, to the acquisition of fresh populations, the adoption of additional burdens—that is the extensionists' theory, and the extensionists, it seems to me, are extremely like what in currency are called the inflationists, who are of opinion that the more paper you issue the more wealth you create and the more prosperity you will have. Well, I am not an inflationist in currency, and I am not an extensionist. In my judgment, at least, it is a greater and a wiser policy to cultivate an Empire than to boom an Empire. . . .

To these ends (the ends of the Imperialists) the principal genius of administration and the energies of Parliament are directed. Social reforms are neglected. Indeed, Mr. Chamberlain told us, in a scornful tone, that to talk of their social reforms was merely "parochial," and that what we ought to occupy ourselves with is this inflated Imperialism. Now, what is the end of that? It means that the Empire is committed to land speculators, to mining syndicates, and that they are to determine the limits of the Empire and the methods of its administration. They are not particular—we all know that—as to the methods to be employed. "Expansion, at any rate, at whatever cost, and by whatever means." That is the sleeping genie. (Laughter.) Well, sometimes I think it might be better if it took a little more sleep. (Renewed laughter.)

### III

The breach which had now passed beyond the possibility of healing was aggravated by the gathering menace in South Africa, which was bringing the issue between Lord Rosebery and Harcourt to the touchstone of peace and war. How dark the outlook had become was apparent to Harcourt in July. Writing to Lewis Harcourt, he said :

*Harcourt to his son, L. V. Harcourt.*

MALWOOD, July 6.— . . . I had a very serious conversation with the Chancellor of the Exchequer at his garden party in Downing Street yesterday. I said the Tithes Bill was my only triumph for the Session unless there was to be a *vote of credit* on the *Kruger war*. To my astonishment and dismay he replied very gravely that "*this was unfortunately very possible.*" I could see he was greatly troubled, which was all the more significant as they had very recently had a Cabinet. I spoke to him very strongly and said, "You

could prevent it if you chose." He replied, "*No, I could not even if I were to resign.*" I said, "You will have a heavy responsibility." He admitted that the opinion of the country was greatly divided. I said, "The Crimean War was a blunder; this would be a crime," from which he did not dissent, but added that it was an "exact reproduction of the state of affairs with Bartle Frere in 1879," and said, "I have no doubt if you wished it you might be in office in two years." I said, "It is the last thing I wish, but if you go to war it will be in six months rather than two years." The whole conversation left a very bad impression on my mind, as Beach was very grave and evidently wished me to understand how great the danger was. The news this morning as to Hofmeyr's reception seems more reassuring. But Beach knows and the Press does not.

Donald Mackenzie, who by the by told Lily (Lady Harcourt) he had left *The Times*, declares that the real firebrand is A. Milner. . . .

The meeting between Kruger and Lord Milner had taken place at Bloemfontein on May 31, but no *modus vivendi* was reached, and through June and July the controversy between the two Governments continued in an ominous atmosphere of acerbity. It turned mainly on the questions of the franchise and the suzerainty. Chamberlain's proposal was that the franchise should be conceded on naturalization; Kruger's proposal postponed the franchise to newcomers for five years, and to those who were in the Transvaal before 1890 to two years. On the question of suzerainty the Boers took their stand on the Convention of 1884. The dispatch of three batteries of artillery to South Africa in July brought the shadow of war visibly nearer. Harcourt had clung to the belief that the defeat of Rhodes in Cape Colony had "practically defeated aggressive policy on the part of Chamberlain and Milner." "They dare not," he said (April 26), "fly in the face of the Cape Parliament." But this confidence was unwarranted. By the end of July the question of peace and war was plainly in the balance. There was a debate on the 28th, but Harcourt took no part in it. Mr. Morley urged him to intervene. "Depend upon it, dear Harcourt," he said, "twenty minutes or half an hour from you to-morrow would be worth silver and gold." But Harcourt was against "an impotent attack on the

Government whilst their cards are still concealed. It would not tend to induce J. C. [Chamberlain] to 'speak with decency and temper'; on the contrary it would provoke him to throw down the glove and break the windows. . . . A great majority will be taken to express the feeling of the country in favour of J. C. which does not exist, and will make the South African Jingoism more imperative in their demands and the Government less able to oppose them."

The peace influences were still powerful. Harcourt had feared another "Fashoda demonstration" from Lord Rosebery; but this fear was unfounded. Campbell-Bannerman declared that there was no case for war or the idea of a threat of war. And in the Cabinet itself there were cross-currents, Salisbury and Mr. Balfour being supposed to be trying to hold Chamberlain's hand. The discussion on the question of an impartial commission was proceeding, and public opinion was lulled by the belief that the concessions which the Boer Government now appeared to be ready to make must render war impossible. Harcourt seemed to share this view. "Altogether I don't doubt that the real policy of the Government is to bluff Kruger and not to fight him," he wrote to Mr. Morley (July 30). He was confirmed in the opinion that there would be no war by the information that "the Beits and the other millionaires" were now dead against matters being pushed further, that comparatively few Outlanders desired to change their nationality, and that "the entire agitation was based on an attempt by Rhodes to get South Africa into turmoil in the hopes of upsetting Schreiner and his majority in the Cape." In this mood of confidence, Harcourt turned with renewed vigour to his controversy with the bishops. "I am deep in Protestant Liberalism," he wrote to his son (August 8), "and am going on Thursday to — — — whom I shall propose for the stake—dragged there by a *donkey*. I think we have got these Romanizers now fairly on the hip, and I do not see how they can escape."

He was still concerned at Chamberlain's "offensive and



provocative" language, but "after the concession of the whole of Milner's terms they *dare* not make war," he said to Mr. Morley (August 9). But Mr. Morley a week later was alarmed at the outlook, and again urged Harcourt to act. "You are the man, for a vast number of reasons, and I begin to feel that *now* is the hour," he wrote (August 16). "I beg you to think very seriously of this. If last year some people emerged from their firesides with a blazing torch, surely it is the right and the duty of other people this year to waken the constituencies out of this paralysing nightmare." But Harcourt still preached quiescence. He replied :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, August 18.— . . . I am greatly impressed by the belief that any move upon our part at this particular moment would only enable Chamberlain to evolve a popular outbreak of the anti-Kruger party, which would strengthen his hands in the policy of provocation upon which he is bent and weaken the position of those in his own party who are willing to restrain him. . . . I have at present fixed the end of September for a visit to West Monmouth, when it is possible that more light will be thrown on the course of the Government. If things come to extremity nothing would serve their purpose better than to cast on us the blame of a breach which they could lay at our door.

The Government, I think, has done nothing so bad as the retirement of Butler from the command.

If it turns out that the last proposals of Kruger are endorsed by the Orange State and the Cape Parliament I think it impossible that the Government can come to blows with the Dutch people. . . .

Mr. Morley agreed that "at the instant nothing could be said," but he added, "my conscience pricks me when I see this infernal villainy going on."

On August 26, at a garden party at Highbury, Chamberlain delivered a menacing speech in which he spoke of Kruger dribbling out reforms "like water out of a squeezed sponge," of the "sands running down in the glass," and so on ; but two days later he sent "a qualified acceptance" of the Boer proposals. Harcourt still held his hand. He was convinced that the "stupendous wickedness of war would be avoided," though "Chamberlain was "no doubt

doing all he could to provoke a conflict." "Your responsibility is heavier than mine," replied Mr. Morley, "so you are very likely right to hold back, tho' I wish after J. C.'s speech you had felt otherwise. I will be as reasonable as possible. But really after the talk about the hour-glass it is not right to leave the Party without a ray of light. (Instead of an hour-glass a good old eight-day clock would be more to the point.)" At Mr. Morley's request for hints for a speech in Scotland, Harcourt sent him a memorandum in which he stated the issue at length, adding, "Fancy a Tory Government going to war with an oligarchy because they take a few months to consider the terms in which they shall consent to a large admission of hostile aliens to political power. I wonder the memories of 1832, 1866 and 1884 do not choke them." "Many thanks, my dear Harcourt, for your excellent memorandum which will keep me straight," replied Mr. Morley. "But it only makes me groan the louder that you don't go to Wales, instead of my going to Scotland." In a further memorandum Harcourt put his finger on what seemed to him the sinister part of the business, as indicating a deliberate purpose of war :

. . . The position taken by Milner from the first was to insist *on the franchise alone* as the means of settling all the particular grounds of complaint. But as soon as the point is reached of Kruger's consenting to the terms demanded by Milner Chamberlain starts the new demand that "*other matters of difference between the two Governments which will not be settled by the franchise*" are to be raised, and that "*it is necessary that these should be settled concurrently with the matters now under discussion.*"

"Truly a great speech" was Harcourt's comment on Mr. Morley's deliverance against war at Arbroath on September 5. "Nobody's approval is more pleasant to me, nor in truth half so pleasant as yours," replied Mr. Morley; "partly because you are an expert, partly because you are the most generous of critics, and lastly because we have fought so many battles side by side for thirteen years and more, not to speak of a battle or two with one another. I think that between us, we have made out

a case which the Jingoës won't easily meet. . . . What *can* to-morrow's Cabinet be about? To put a sword in J. C.'s hand? Hardly. . . ." Next day he heard that J. C. had had "a check" in the Cabinet, and the negotiations continued. Harcourt at last broke silence in a speech at Tredegar, in which he maintained that Chamberlain's suzerainty claim was inadmissible, the word having been expressly struck out in the Convention of 1884. On the other hand the Transvaal could not claim to be a sovereign state, for it had surrendered its treaty-making power. He spoke of the Boers' proposals in regard to the franchise favourably, recalled Chamberlain's declaration in May 1896, that war with the Transvaal would be "as immoral as it was unwise," referred to the provocations given to the Boers, the Jameson Raid and so on, and concluded with a passionate protest against war :

. . . A war waged for what? For the details of a franchise bill, for a difference of two years in the qualification. . . . A war between the English and Dutch races throughout South Africa, which when your superiority is asserted, as of course it will be—will leave behind it an inheritance of undying hatred in the hearts of the people among whom you will still have to live, such a war will be a dreadful close to an expiring century and a glorious reign.

"Excellent and admirable, my dear Harcourt," wrote Mr. Morley on the speech (September 21). "It exhausts the case. Its weight must be felt in every quarter; its fullness of fact, its soundness of argument, its seriousness. Now I am really content. It cannot be answered. You see how limp the truculent *Times* is. The moment is as good as can be, for the tide is on the turn in the country, and will soon be racing. Your speech will mightily affect the Cabinet to-morrow. . . ."

Harcourt's intervention cleared the air in the Liberal camp. "It is plain that there will be plenty of cross-currents in the Party on this question," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "As far as I can judge the majority will be on our side, but in any event there will be a serious schism which will greatly affect future political prospects." So

far Campbell-Bannerman had not spoken since his speech in the House on July 28, and Mr. Morley was concerned at the lack of a lead from the official head of the Party. When at length Campbell-Bannerman spoke at Maidstone, he was clear on the main issue, but disturbed both Harcourt and Mr. Morley by the emphasis he laid on "paramountcy." Harcourt had completely disposed of the "suzerainty" issue in his speech and in letters to *The Times*. He had shown that the claim to suzerainty had been deliberately abandoned in the Convention of 1884, and had not been heard of again until Chamberlain revived it in 1897. "Paramountcy" seemed to him only a dangerous equivalent for "suzerainty," and writing to congratulate Campbell-Bannerman on his "strong, clear and sound speech" at Maidstone, he discussed the grounds of intervention, and proceeded :

Harcourt to Campbell-Bannerman.

October 8.— . . . What then is there outside these rights ?

• We have discarded *suzerainty* on account of its vagueness and danger. But recourse is had to *paramountcy*, and it seems to be supposed that this supplies some *extra right*. But this is *ignotum per ignotius*. Suzerainty has about it some savour of *right*—a fatal analogue to a feudal superiority. But what is *paramountcy* ? Is it the assertion of a definite *right*, or only a declaration of *might* ? If of right, how does it differ from suzerainty which is abandoned—what are its limits and how is it to be interpreted ? International law has its code of interpretation. But what is the standard by which paramountcy is to be governed and reconciled with the recognition of the independence of the subordinate ? *Misera est servitus ubi jus incertum*, and what a miserable sort of independence is that which is subordinate to a capricious *paramountcy* defined by nothing but the will of the stronger. We must be prepared to make clear to our minds and that of Kruger what amount of intervention we do and do not intend to base on the claim of *paramountcy*. Otherwise he will be justified in saying that there is no security for his independence.

What does our "*paramountcy throughout S. Africa*" mean and involve ? Does it embrace the Orange Free State ? Is Portugal with Delagoa Bay within its purview ? Can we within these boundaries claim what we please for our subjects on the ground of proximity and superior force ? Indeed if on the pretension of *paramountcy in respect of the general interests of S. Africa* we claim a

general right of over-lordship, why are we not entitled to do as we like equally at Beira and Delagoa Bay? *Superior force* we unquestionably possess, but the question is, does that confer upon us *exceptional rights*? In one sense we are the supreme power at sea, but have we a paramountcy which justifies us in dealing outside the limits of international law? . . .

*Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.*

HOTEL TERMINUS, PARIS, October 10, 1899.— . . . To my entirely lay mind, two of your points present themselves thus :

1. We have no right under the convention to demand or urge a change of franchise.

No. But the Milnerite theory is that we have the right to protect our countrymen from grievances ; and that we suggest an effective naturalization as the shortest way of getting the grievances cured, i.e. let them cure them themselves. This will be what the Government will say.

If you ask me my own opinion, I hold this " franchise " movement as the biggest hypocrisy in the whole fraud. It was designed in order that

- (a) Kruger, seeing the real drift of it, might refuse it, and supply a direct ground of quarrel ;
- (b) If he accepted it, it would mean that not being able to get in by the front door they would get the area gate opened and get possession in this way of the country ;
- (c) The innocent Briton would be gulled by the flavour of legality and of civilized progress in the word " franchise."

But this is only my view of it, and practically they are dropping it because the Outlander does not care about it and would not use it if he might.

Then as to the general power or responsibility of this country, it is no doubt vague, but I think it is substantial. As a matter of fact, the two races in the Colony, Natal, and in the Orange Free State, are hindered from forgetting their differences by this constant quarrel in the Transvaal. The sooner it is settled the better in the interest of S. Africa generally. Therefore we have a stronger inducement or title to intervene than if it was merely the ill-treatment of some Englishmen at Calais.

It is analogous, surely, to the right of the Powers of Europe to try and stop misgovernment in Turkey, which endangers general peace ?

And as to the Portuguese, I should answer to your question, Yes, there also, if the same danger arose, but it cannot arise, for the two jealous races are not there together.

This is of course a mere lay view, but I think there is reason in it. It is a case of *tua res agitur* intensified by our undoubtedly predominant position, which carries with it responsibility, and

responsibility gives a right which if not technically and legally definite, is yet, as I said, substantial.

But in spite of this disagreement Campbell-Bannerman had come substantially into line with Harcourt and Mr. Morley. In sympathy with them were men like Spencer, Ripon, Kimberley and Bryce. On the other hand, powerful influences within the Party, representing the Imperialist view put forward at the City Liberal Club by Lord Rosebery, were moving, if not to the support of the Government, at least to an attitude of benevolent neutrality which must lead to support. "Note Haldane's speech in to-day's *Times*. Perks yesterday, etc., etc.," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt. "A friend from London writes last night that the talk there is of two groups, you, C.-B., me for one, and Grey, Asquith, Fowler for the other."

By this time all hope of a peaceful end to the prolonged struggle had vanished. "I hope to be fit by the end of the week when we shall fight like devils for conciliation and hate one another for the love of God," wrote Harcourt to his daughter-in-law, the present Viscountess Harcourt. "Things seem to get more mixed every day as we float down to Niagara. It is just like two men compelled to fight a duel they neither of them desire, by the malice and stupidity of their seconds. I should like to shoot the seconds." The next day, October 11, came the news of Krüger's ultimatum, and the country, plunged in a fever of Jingo enthusiasm, was embarked upon war with the Boer Republics.

#### IV

A domestic event, the marriage of Lewis Harcourt to Miss Mary Ethel Burns, the daughter of Walter H. Burns, the American banker, had made a profound change in the current of Harcourt's life. Enough has been said in the course of this book to indicate the unusual intensity of the affection that existed between father and son. It was due no doubt primarily to the tragic circumstances that

surrounded the birth of "Loulou." That event had taken place amid the wreckage of Harcourt's deepest personal attachments, and all the wealth of his family affection became centred in the child who remained the sole heritage of his broken life. The companionship begun in these circumstances continued with unabated passion on both sides to the end of Harcourt's career. It was a union of singularly opposite temperaments. Harcourt was violent and impatient, his voice loud and his laughter unrestrained as a child's. He was quick to anger, but he was as quick to forget his anger, and to make fun of his own impatience. His enjoyment of life was unflagging, and his manners and habits were the free, unconsidered expression of his enormous vitality. In all these, and other, respects he furnished a striking contrast to his son. "Loulou" spoke quietly and moved softly. His voice was never raised in anger, and no circumstances ever disarmed his invulnerable restraint and politeness. Whatever his emotions might be, they were kept under the discipline of an iron will, and he was most to be feared when his voice was most velvety. Unlike his father, who wore his heart on his sleeve for claws to peck at, and poured out all that was in his mind regardless of consequences, "Loulou" pursued his path silently and remorselessly. That path had one constant goal, the interest of the father who was the dominating passion of his life. To that passion he had sacrificed all his own personal aims. Gifted with powers which would have assured him success in most spheres, he had declined to enter Parliament or to accept any office which would separate him from his father, and no drudgery in his service was too exacting or too menial for his devotion. Harcourt had long protested to his son against this elimination of himself, and there is little doubt that whatever disappointment he may have felt in regard to the premiership was due, less to his own ambitions, than to his sense that "Loulou" had not got the only reward he desired. The engagement of his son in November 1898 gave him infinite delight. Replying to a letter from Chamberlain, he said :

MALWOOD, *December 2, 1898*.—I have to thank you very much for your kind congratulations.

You know what Loulou has been to me and I have often felt that I engrossed too much of his life. When I say that I am happy you may be quite sure that I feel convinced that his future happiness—which has ever been my first and last object—is assured.

It is another link in the American alliance. We are all Americans now! I sometimes think we shall have to call the *old* world into existence to redress the balance of the *new*. However your experience and mine are encouraging examples. I write this on my wedding day anniversary. . . . Austen must marry an Englishwoman.

. Writing, when the time of the marriage was approaching, to his sister Emily at Malvern, he touched on the other side of the picture :

MALWOOD, LYNDHURST, *April 24, 1899*.—It was a great joy to me to have those quiet days with you—a thing I have not enjoyed for many years. My mind is much filled with the long course of letters I read at Malvern, which, with many sad recollections, bear constant witness to our devoted love for each other, which has ever been one of the sheet anchors of my life. Of course we must expect with gathering years to feel upon us both the weight of age, but I was glad to satisfy myself that you are substantially well and sound, and that we shall have some more years still together.

The reality of the loss of Loulou's constant presence and help sometimes weighs very heavily on my spirits, but the thought of his happiness consoles me. He has already sacrificed too much of his life to my interests, and I cannot repine that he is now to have a life of his own. But still the pain of separation is more and more hard to bear. . . .

The marriage took place at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on July 1, 1899, the ceremony being performed by Dr. Davidson, then Bishop of Winchester, with whom, as we have seen, Harcourt was engaged at this time in correspondence on the subject of ritualistic practices in the Church. "I never thought to have been so sincerely happy as I am at my darling boy's marriage," Harcourt wrote to his sister. "It will make what remains to me of life brighter and happier, and I think she is in all ways worthy of him."



## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE BOER WAR

Different attitude of Harcourt and Rosebery—Silence of Liberal leaders on the war policy—The Stanhope amendment—Black week—Chamberlain's South African advisers—Preparing for the Khaki election.

THE history of the South African War does not belong to the subject of this book except in so far as it affects the concurrent conflict within the Liberal Party and Harcourt's part in that conflict. In spite of their detachment from the official life of the Party, Harcourt and Lord Rosebery were still the principals around whom the domestic controversy raged and who embodied most definitely the issue at stake. The challenge of war brought the long dispute between the two statesmen to the complete rupture which had always been latent in it. From their earliest associations there had been visible a fundamental hostility which did not admit of being reconciled. In temperament they were at the poles. Both, it is true, had in a remarkable degree the saving quality of humour; but there the likeness ended. The elder statesman was bold and broad in expression, arrogant in manner, equipped with an unrivalled knowledge of affairs, masterful and combative, loving the smell of the powder of controversy as much as he loved the smell of his roses at Malwood. His rival was sensitive and elusive, subject to moods that blew now hot, now cold, and that brought him suddenly into action and then sent him equally suddenly out of action. Between temperaments so dissimilar there could never have been much sympathy; but it would be unjust to both of them to suppose that their long discord was

merely a matter of incompatibility of temper. Many men in public life as widely separated as they were in manner and feeling have managed to get along tolerably in harness—Salisbury and Disraeli for example.

But behind the clash of temperament was the much more serious clash of ideas. On the crucial question of external policy the two men stood for entirely opposed views. This opposition had been the real source of their differences from the beginning, and it blazed up into fierce activity with the outbreak of a war which challenged their faiths more decisively than any event they had yet confronted. On the day that war broke out, each took his side. "The die is cast and a very bad throw," wrote Harcourt to Loulou on October 11. "The situation is critical and what we have to do is not to lose our heads. We must of course vote the supplies to repel an attack on a British colony, but that is not inconsistent with a censure of the policy which has resulted in war, which is what we did *flagrante bello* in December 1878 under Hartington's auspices when Whitbread moved a vote of censure on the Afghan War." "The great thing to aim at," he wrote to Mr. Morley, "is some joint action with the C.-B's." "I confess I am not sanguine of holding the Party together," replied Mr. Morley. "It is so easy for the Fowlers, etc., to say that if the Boers had not delivered the ultimatum, they would have certainly censured the Government, *but* etc., etc. My expectation is that you will find C.-B. himself in this humour."

Meanwhile Lord Rosebery had publicly thrown down a challenge to the Party. Writing to a correspondent (October 11), he spoke of rescuing our fellow-countrymen in the Transvaal from intolerable conditions of "subjection and injustice," and concluded with a thrust at the Gladstone Government of 1880-85. "Without attempting to judge the policy which concluded peace after the reverse of Majuba Hill, I am bound to state my profound conviction that there is no conceivable government in this country which would repeat it." Writing to Mr. Morley (October 12), Harcourt said, "Rosebery's letter is a masterpiece of cunning and

meanness. The kick administered in the last sentence to the dead lion is thoroughly characteristic, and that "from the bear-leader of the Midlothian Campaign, which turned largely on the Transvaal question." The position of other leaders of the Party had yet to be made clear. Mr. Asquith, speaking at Dundee (October 11), credited the Government with a sincere desire to avoid war; "but now (he said) that it has been forced upon them they will see it through to the end." Campbell-Bannerman was non-committal, and, writing to Harcourt, argued that we had a substantial right of intervention because the state of the Transvaal endangered general peace. Mr. Morley was against taking any counsel with C.-B. or his colleagues. "No advantage would come of it," he said. "Their position for the last six weeks has been described by yourself in language strong enough. All that time, when criticism might have been useful, they were silent. Now they say (cf. Asquith) we must be silent because of the Boer ultimatum, but we will speak up manfully some other day. . . . Therefore you must go to C.-B. without my company and without my proxy."

With this confusion in the ranks of the distracted Liberal Party, Parliament met on October 17 to vote supplies, and on an amendment moved by Mr. Philip Stanhope (Lord Weardale) expressing strong disapproval of the negotiations, Harcourt delivered a formidable indictment of the Government policy. Describing it a contemporary writer<sup>1</sup> said it was a fighting speech, built on traditional lines, "a kind of three-decked galleon that moved slowly like a thing of weight, but yet poured in its broadsides with terrific effect. . . . Mr. Chamberlain, who at first had worn his customary air of self-centred and inscrutable indifference, began to wince under the attack. Thrice he rose and challenged a point in a subdued tone whose very calm seemed the result of a tremendous effort of self-restraint. But he was scarcely happy in his interruptions. They seemed no more than attempts to deprecate the inevitable flow of argument and,

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, October 19, 1899.

as he chatted with the two brothers Balfour, a quick gesture of the hands or a sudden play of feature showed that Sir William's onslaught had not failed to move him." Harcourt dismissed the doctrine that when war had once broken out the Opposition had nothing to do but to hold their peace and sanction the policy that led to the war. Chamberlain had said that the present situation was due to the "criminal obstinacy" of the Boers. "'Criminal obstinacy'! Why in one of his despatches the Colonial Secretary says, 'One proposal after another has been an advance and concession on what has been made before.' . . . Is that 'criminal obstinacy' . . . Within a month or so of the Bloemfontein Conference the South African Republic actually passed a law which is described in the despatch of the Colonial Secretary of, I think, July 27, in these words 'that it differs only by two years from the proposal of Sir Alfred Milner.' " The speech was in effect, though moderately stated, a prolonged indictment of Chamberlain's provocative diplomacy, culminating in searching questions as to the delay in formulating the final proposals which the Duke of Devonshire had said would give fair promise of peace, the raising of the question of "paramountcy," and the menacing military movement. He suggested, rather than stated that these things had provoked the ultimatum. A few days later Harcourt attacked the Government for refusing to impose new taxation to meet the cost of the war, and writing to Hicks-Beach, who had informed him of the decision because "I value your good opinion too much not to wish that you should know my reasons," he said, "nothing in my opinion will do more injury abroad than the knowledge that the House of Commons and the public, though ready to stand for the war, are not willing to pay for it."

Already the popular expectation of a swift and triumphant close to the war, with the British troops established in Pretoria by Christmas, had become dimmed by disaster,

and the Boers crossing the frontier east and south-west had enveloped our forces at Ladysmith, and the garrisons of Mafeking and Kimberley. "The horrors of this war oppress me," wrote Harcourt to his sister (November 7, 1899), "but I at least have the supreme consolation that I have done all in my power to avert it. I would not have the guilt of this blood upon my head for all the world can give." His anger at "this detestable war" was mixed with wrath at the whirlpool of dissension within the Liberal Party. Lord Rosebery, speaking at Bath and Edinburgh, claimed Pitt as "the first Liberal Imperialist," prophesied that in ten years "Liberal Imperialism is destined to control the liberties of this country," and claimed that Gladstone himself, after this war, would not be able to repeat his action after Majuba Hill. "Fancy the statue of Pitt set up for the Liberal Party of the future to fall down and worship," Harcourt wrote to Lewis Harcourt. "Shades of Fox and Grey! I shall before long pronounce myself on this theme. The *finis* of Pitt (who was the worst Foreign Minister and War Minister this country has ever known) was most inglorious, and he only anticipated by his death dismissal from office." Writing three days later (November 1) to Lewis Harcourt he said:

. . . I agree that the Rosebery rocket should be allowed to fizzle out. It will come down later on stick. *The Times* will get tired of puffing him, and his hold on our people is limited. I doubt whether even in ten years he will be capable of leading a party. He is too selfish, too trivial, too much a *poseur*, and I fancy what he admires in Chatham was his isolation which ended in his choosing to act with no one, till no one would act with him. . . . He will never take the rough and tumble of party warfare but keep himself for the *réclame* of safe displays at intervals. . . .

The prospects of the anti-war party were darkened by the capture of the Liberal Press by the Imperialists. The *Daily News*, under E. T. Cook, had been throughout the most powerful supporter of the Chamberlain-Milner policy, and in the first weeks of the war Mr. Massingham had gone from the editorship of the *Daily Chronicle* and Mr. W. M. Crook from that of the *Echo*, and every critical voice was

silenced in the London Press. There was correspondence between Mr. Morley and Harcourt as to the possibility of establishing a new paper ; but the project was in the circumstances impossible. "I have been exercised by people about the suppression of Massingham," wrote Mr. Morley to Harcourt (December 3). "No doubt the blow is as heavy as can be. He and C. W. D. [Dilke] came here on Tuesday, and we talked it all over. The whole point is £250,000. That is the figure of M. for a new paper. . . . This figure is absolutely out of reach."

•The Party tide was now flowing powerfully against Harcourt and Mr. Morley. Sir Edward Grey had given the Government a bill of acquittal at Glasgow, and Mr. Asquith had declared himself hardly less unequivocally. "Poor C.-B. must feel very uncomfortable surrounded by men he cannot trust and a party which does not care to support him," wrote Harcourt to his son. "My fingers itch to be at them," he told his sister. His anger at events was increased by the unfortunate speech of Chamberlain at Birmingham in which he "read a lesson to France," and, moved doubtless by the success of the German Emperor's visit to England, suggested that Germany might join an entente of England and America in the future.

The one gleam in the darkness was the growing firmness of Campbell-Bannerman exhibited in a speech at Birmingham. "C.-B. has cut the painter of the dinghy in which Rosebery, Grey and Fowler may drift off by themselves," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley, who at the same moment was writing to him : "I felt sure that he would have to drop down on our side and he has done it." Harcourt replied :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, November 17, 1899.—You will have seen that I quite concur in the satisfaction you express as to C.-B's speech. He was bold and good. I never think you do that worthy Scot full justice. Mr. Gladstone used to delight to sing Mrs. J. Wood's song in the "Milliner's Bill" :

"No matter what you do.  
If your heart's only true,  
And his heart was true to Poll."

A circumstance you will no doubt record in the *Life*.<sup>1</sup> C.-B.'s heart is true to the Liberal Poll and I *non ignara mali miseris succurrere disco*.

I have written to applaud him. It is a shot between wind and water to the recreants and the shaky ones. I leave you and Lord R. to chant the praises of the hypocritical despot in Palace Yard [Cromwell] in amœbious strains.

*Et virtute tu dignus et hic.*

I detest Napoleon too, but he was a much greater genius, and in all ways a bigger human being—and then he had not a wart on his nose. And his *blague* was more tolerable than the other's cant. It is very difficult to discover a really good hero. I think Macaulay was right to fix upon Washington.

In the general stampede to Jingoism, Harcourt was not without personal encouragement that he valued, and none gave him more satisfaction than a letter from his old colleague at the Treasury, Sir Francis Mowatt, to whom he had written suggesting that Lord Esher's name should be put forward for the official control of the Colonial Office. Mowatt, agreeing that Chamberlain needed such a man at his elbow to give him friendly criticism, objected on the ground that Lord Esher could not be spared from the Office of Works, and proceeded:

*Sir Francis Mowatt to Harcourt.*

December 18.— . . . But, after all, all this is only an excuse for writing to you in a crisis when your own wise words should be in every Englishman's memory. I am a sincere friend of Milner's, and I do not forget what a useful day's work he has done, but his shallow boast that "he would force the pace in South Africa"—of which one of the Ministry told me a couple of months back with smug satisfaction—are to my mind some of the "sorrowfullest words that ever blotted paper."

It is not the Chartered Company or Jameson or Rhodes who are primarily responsible for the War. If they had been promptly disavowed and punished, and if the Imperial Government had repudiated the whole gang, and shown the repudiation to be honest, no horror would have followed. It is the support and admiration of the vulgar rich of this country for Stock Exchange piracy that has made diplomacy impossible. To think that Parliament and Government had not good form enough to rise above this dirty moral squalor is to me the ugliest thing in our history for the last

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Morley was at this time engaged on the *Life of Gladstone*.

century. It is because you (and *longo intervallo* John Morley) were the only statesmen who realized the situation and exposed this *κακὸν ὑποβλόν* to the House, that I treat myself to the writing of this letter. Otherwise my official position has shut my mouth from the moment the Government definitely adopted their present position.

During the winter Harcourt's activities were suspended by illness. "I am lying here [Malwood] in perfect solitude like a bare hulk on the seashore," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "My bronchial attack has been supplemented by lumbago and rheumatism, which prevent me eating or sleeping, so that I am quite *hors de combat*." But he was back in the fighting line when Parliament reassembled, and a formal attack on the policy of the Government was made. By this time the tale of catastrophe in South Africa had aroused grave concern. Gatacre's defeat at Stormberg, Methuen's defeat at Magersfontein, and Buller's failure on the Tugela river were the outstanding features in a general landscape of disillusion, only lightened by the fact that Roberts and Kitchener\* with new forces were now coming into action.

\* The war debate in the House resolved itself largely into a duel between Harcourt and Chamberlain. Harcourt had warned Chamberlain that he should call attention to his exoneration of Rhodes and to the suspicions caused by Hawkesley's refusal to produce the telegrams to the South Africa Committee. In reply to Chamberlain (February 4) he assured him that in what he would say he should not imply "suspicion of your word." But he added, "You know that I have deeply regretted and condemned the unhappy speech in which you appeared to condone the conduct of Rhodes, whom I regard as the principal author of the war both in the Raid and ever since." In his speech (February 5) he seemed, while repeating explicitly his denial that the Committee had "hushed up" anything, to ask for the full disclosure of the suppressed documents to clear away, in the public interest, the suspicions that had their roots in Chamberlain's ill-omened speech. He met the plea of the Government that criticism in the midst of war was reprehensible by recalling the attacks of Chatham,



Earl Grey and Beaconsfield on the Governments of their day in time of war. "What a preposterous doctrine is this," he cried; "the greater the disaster the greater the impunity." He created a sensation by revealing the fact that in 1881 Chamberlain had been the chosen spokesman of the Government in defending the Majuba agreement and recalling Chamberlain's words on that occasion, "I cannot understand how those who have talked so glibly of the honour of this country should fail to see that the greatest shame and humiliation would be in maintaining a high-handed breach of faith and destroying the independence of a people which we have solemnly engaged to respect." "He has altered his opinion," cried Harcourt; "I adhere to mine." From this thrust he passed to a withering examination of the pre-war negotiations, the approximation to a settlement on the franchise and the sinister introduction of a new issue, described as suzerainty, supremacy, paramountcy, all of which were terms incompatible with the independence which Chamberlain had most eloquently justified and which for fifteen years had been accepted without challenge. Replying to the Government's plea that they expected Kruger to yield, he said it was because they chose to be ignorant.

. . . The great misfortune is (he went on), and it was one of the causes of this war, that the only men who were consulted were men on one side of the street—yes, Sir, that side of the street which was inhabited by the authors of the Raid. Then, Sir, there was another source of the best African opinion at home—the helots, I suppose, who inhabit Park Lane. In my opinion, Sir, it was not the best South African opinion which misled you. (Here Mr. Chamberlain interrupted.) . . . The rt. hon. Gentleman asks me what people were consulted. Did Mr. Schreiner or Mr. Hofmeyr, who were the representatives of the Dutch in the Colony, inform the High Commissioner that President Kruger would probably yield. . . . And so you broke off the negotiations on September 22. The sands had run out; and you would deliver your own ultimatum. You prepared your military policy; you had a defensive force. You prepared an aggressive force which was to be sent out, and the Boers replied by their ultimatum. That was the finale of the stage of negotiations. If you had been properly informed of the people you had to deal with and the situation that was created, it was from the first a policy of war, and I agree with the Colonial Secretary

when he said that, looking at the whole thing, war was from the first inevitable. From the moment you determined that you would impose when you pleased your will in the internal administration of the Transvaal, war was a necessity and a certainty. But it was a direct reversal of all the policy you had given, and all the guarantees in the Convention by which, up to then, you had been bound. . . .

## III

Harcourt made another spirited speech on March 6 on the finance of the war ; but he was still, he told his sister, " a very poor creature . . . just able to get down to the House of Commons to do what is absolutely necessary," and looking to a visit to his beloved Italy to restore him to health. But he had his solace. The birth of a granddaughter filled him with delight. " I am very glad it is a girl," he wrote to his sister, " and I hope I may live to hear her prattle on my knee." And " Bobby " was cramming for his Foreign Office exam. " If he succeeds I shall really in the last twelve months have established my family for two generations. I feel very happy to-day." It was no unusual experience. His genius for happiness was never long suppressed, and there were few days on which the sun did not shine whatever sudden storms swept across his sky. His letters from Italy were full of his unquenchable delight in things—the buildings, the weather, the flowers. " The wistaria beyond belief. They treat it as we ought to do, viz., prune it close like vines to a single eye." He had seen splendid white cattle, " the only beasts worthy of North Mymms Park," <sup>1</sup> he wrote to his son. " We went to receive the benediction of the Pope in St. Peter's, but as G. Murray said of Gladstone, ' I did not find him of much use to me ' or my influenza." He went to Venice which " still remains to me the Queen " ; but, he " did not go to Naples to behold Vesuvius or the Earl of Rosebery in eruption there."

He returned to Malwood in June. " I follow with languid interest the triumph of our arms and the dissolution of our Party," he wrote to Mr. Morley. " The truth is, I

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Burns's country place.

am wrapped up in such a surrounding of domestic bliss that I have little care for external affairs. . . . I compassionate you and all who are compelled to make speeches at this moment. You might as well talk to the lions in the Colosseum." His domestic happiness was completed by the intimation that his son "Bobby," having passed his examination, had been appointed to a vacancy in the Foreign Office. "I have written to express my gratitude to Lord S." (Salisbury), he wrote to his sister. "It is a great satisfaction to me to have the dear boy thus *permanently* settled and done for. *Felix faustumque sit*. This has indeed been for me a happy year." He was still unwell, but when he reappeared in the House his old triumphant ebullience reasserted itself. "How long are you going to keep us on the rack?" asked Hicks-Beach in an audible whisper across the table as he rose to speak on the vote for new war expenditure. "I am going to toast you for two hours," he replied genially, as he launched upon what was acclaimed as "the greatest oration of the Session." It started from the fact that already £71,000,000 had been spent on the war, of which only £14,000,000 had been raised by taxation, and he charged the Government with adopting this reckless borrowing because they had a "khaki" election in view. The summer had apparently brought the war near the end. Cronje had surrendered at Paardeberg, Ladysmith and Mafeking had been relieved, and Roberts was in Pretoria. The Government were known to contemplate an appeal to the country on the strength of the completion of a victorious war. Harcourt's attack revived the drooping spirits of the Liberals. "The best thing that has happened to the Liberal Party and the country for many a long day," wrote Mr. Morley to him. "If you like you can do Midlothian over again." "J. C. [Chamberlain] was furious at the speech and moved up to cram the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who waved him off," replied Harcourt. "I suffer much from the *esprit d'escalier* and cannot forgive myself for having failed to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the present Cabinet were at all acquainted with an '*im-*

*perious colleague* who dictated popular Budgets where you borrowed everything and paid nothing. The things we have not said are always so much more to the purpose than what one does say."

Replying to Spencer who, writing to him on his speech, said, "You seem to have settled the Opposition and astounded them," Harcourt wrote :

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

MALWOOD, August 18, 1900.—I was much pleased to receive your kind and interesting letter and to know that you approved my speech, which I think gave some comfort to our distracted Party. The mess that had been made by the folly of Lawson on one side, the malignity of the Roseberyites on the other, was so bad that, as you know, they had made the position of poor C.-B. intolerable, which was what the latter aimed at. I therefore plucked up my courage to give him a helping hand. . . . I did not think it was possible that any one could have been worse treated than I was, but I admit that they have exceeded themselves in their conduct towards C.-B., and if I can do nothing else I think I can defeat their schemes. I am afraid he, poor fellow, feels his position keenly, but we must do what we can to keep him in the saddle—he is an honest Liberal without any adjective, a thing which can be said of very few in what is called the Liberal Party. There is not a man on the Front Bench, I think, except myself who is really loyal to him, and very few behind.

The Roseberyites put him in, in the hope and expectation that he would be the *alter ego* of R., and when they found they were mistaken they determined to oust him. I am sorry to know that E. Grey has gone in thick and thin with the Perks and H. Fowler gang. . . . I think we who are like-minded ought to stick together. I cannot hear of your throwing up the sponge. I remonstrate with J. Morley, who holds the same sort of language. But if an old post-horse like myself am still willing to run a stage you young ones have no right to go out to grass. . . .

All through the summer Mr. Morley, who had an affection of the throat, had been in correspondence with Harcourt on the subject of his desire to retire; but Harcourt would not hear of it. "Later perhaps, but not now," was his constant refrain. "This is not the moment when either you or I can with credit desert the ship."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### HARCOURT'S LAST FIGHT

Confusion in the Party ranks—The Khaki election—Last election campaign at Monmouth—The Frog and the Ox—Liberal Imperial League—Paying for the War—*Daily News* changes hands—Death of Queen Victoria—Failure to make peace with the Boers—Activity in the House—The concentration camps—Rival Liberal dinners—Campbell-Bannerman's prudence—Belligerent rights of Boer leaders—Lord Rosebery's "Clean Slate"—The St. James's Hall meeting—Campbell-Bannerman's isolation in the House—Harcourt's untiring support—Lord Rosebery and the Tabernacle—King Edward offers Harcourt a peerage.

IT was a hopeless battle in which Harcourt, a free lance, once more, fought his last fight. More than forty years had elapsed since that high-spirited adventure at Kirkcaldy, and his political life was now near its close. He would gladly have escaped the ordeal of another electoral struggle. He was feeling the burden of years, and the cumulative effect of repeated illness. The causes to which he had devoted his life had passed into a more complete eclipse than had overshadowed them for fifty years, and the Party to which he had been attached all his days seemed to be in the last stages of dissolution. In any circumstances it would have been a forlorn battle for Liberalism. The state of war is the negation of all its creed, and the temper of the war mind is intolerant of its appeal to reasonable ideas. When war comes, Liberalism is driven from the hustings to the catacombs, only to emerge when the frenzy is over and the ravages of war have to be repaired. In the present case, its situation was exceptionally desperate. The war had shattered the Party into frag-

ments.<sup>1</sup> With such confusion in the ranks, the only question was the measure of the overthrow. The country was, in any case, overwhelmingly with the Government. It assumed that the war was over, and that all that remained was the settlement of the conquered territories, and in the frame of mind which prevailed there was no disposition to entrust that task to the Liberals. It was true that a powerful section of the Liberals had been almost as definitely pro-war as the Tories, and that Lord Rosebery, raising the banner of Imperialism, had been the first to declare that there were to be no more Majuba Hill episodes. It was true that the Liberal Imperial League, which now came into action as the Roseberyite organization, was as definitely committed to the Government policy as the Tories were, and directed activities against the pro-Boers rather than against the traditional enemy. But this availed them little. Chamberlain was a ruthless person in political warfare, and had no disposition to show his gratitude to his Liberal supporters. This was his hour of triumph, and he exploited it without mercy. He himself gave the slogan of the election in a message to the Government candidate at Heywood—"Every seat lost by the Government was a seat won by the Boers." The telegraphist, inspired by the mood of the moment, amended it to "a vote sold to the Boers," and so it appeared, the error being explained away not by Chamberlain but by Mr. Balfour. With this spirit abroad, the prospects of the Liberals were sufficiently dark. They were not improved by the great ritualist controversy in which Harcourt had been so prominently engaged. Harcourt had antagonized the High Churchmen by his aggressive

<sup>1</sup> The *Annual Register* computed the strength of the divisions at the time as follows:

Supporters of the War.—Sir H. Fowler, Mr. Asquith, Sir E. Grey, with a party numbering in all 62.

Opponents of the War.—Sir W. Harcourt, Mr. J. Morley and Sir W. Lawson, with a group numbering 68.

Those who, like Sir H. Campbell-Bannerman and Mr. Herbert Gladstone, took a middle line.

About 27 who voted now with one group, now with another, according to the merits of the occasion.

Protestantism, and he had dissatisfied the Kensingtonites by declining to press for an extension of the existing law on the ground that that law was sufficient if it were enforced. His grievance was not against the law, but against what he regarded as the weak administration of the law.

Three manifestoes were issued to the electorate by the leader and ex-leaders of the Party. Those of Harcourt and Lord Rosebery, representing the two extreme positions, attracted most attention. Harcourt sought to widen the issue from the war to the general failure of the Government in domestic affairs, housing, finance, old age pensions, and so on. It was in vain. The country was seething with the passions of war, and was heedless of anything else. Harcourt had no reason to fear for himself. He was in indifferent health, but in spite of that he spoke every night in his constituency for nine days, and then again, after a break, resumed his campaign. He dealt with the war frankly, declaring that the Jameson Raid was the primary cause and that the Government were culpable for their failure to deal with the true authors of the Raid. "Mr. Chamberlain describes the Raid as a mistake," he said. "That is not the language that ought to be employed by the English Government on such an outrage against the law of nations. It was not a mistake: it was a crime. It was a crime which has had most unhappy and most bloody consequences." The spirit of his attack may be illustrated by one passage from a speech at Ebbw Vale (September 25):

. . . In regard to our relations with our colonies, Mr. Chamberlain seems to entertain the conviction that he is Captain Cook and General Wolfe rolled into one (laughter), and that he discovered Australia and that he stormed the heights of Quebec (renewed laughter); but historically that is not true. These colonies existed and were great before Mr. Chamberlain became Colonial Secretary, and I want to know what is the ground upon which he claims to himself that the happy relations between Great Britain and her colonies is due to his administration. Of course you saw in the speech he made the other day he talked, speaking of the manner in which we rejoiced in the way the colonies had stood by us, as if that was part of the merits of Her Majesty's Government. The merits they claim confidence upon are always the merits of other people, and not their own.

(Cheers.) But how is it our colonies have become so greatly attached to this country? The colonies have become attached to us because we gave them the great gift of Home Rule (cheers), because we gave them absolute self-government, by which they have made themselves what they are, and which has attached them far more to the British Crown than if we had attempted to govern them from Downing Street.

The result of the poll was less favourable than in 1895, but it was still an overwhelming victory for Harcourt, the figures being :

Harcourt	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	5,976
Gardiner	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	2,401

a majority of 3,575. The victory, the last he was to have in the electoral battlefield, fell on the eve of his seventy-third birthday. Writing to his "dearest children" on that event, he said, "I ought indeed to be grateful for all the blessings of a long life more happy and prosperous than I deserve, but the greatest of all is that which I have enjoyed in the unselfish and devoted love of my children. . . . I have returned home fresher a good deal than I started. Indeed I never felt in better form both in mind and body than on my seventy-third birthday." He was inundated with congratulations on his election. "What a campaign you have had!" wrote Mr. Morley to him (October 13). "What resources, what indomitable spirit! What skill in topics! . . . J. C. won't get over your frog and ox in a hurry. That was just the kind of figure needed to drive his 'immortal sentence' home.<sup>1</sup> . . . Lloyd George is in

<sup>1</sup> The passage alluded to was the following in a speech at Cwm, on October 10:

George IV was in the habit of saying to the Duke of Wellington that he, when Prince Regent, had commanded the cavalry at Waterloo, and the Duke's reply invariably was, "I have frequently heard your Majesty say so,"—(laughter)—and when Mr. Chamberlain went bragging about the war, and the successes he had had, he (Sir William) was inclined to say, "I have frequently heard your Secretaryship say so." (Renewed laughter.) There was that immortal sentence in his recent speech at Burton-on-Trent: "I might die to-morrow, and still there would remain this great Empire." (Laughter.) It was worth having a General Election to arrive at that truth. If that speech had not been made the people might



some ways the most satisfactory—a brave and clever little man who ought to have a good future.” “I admired your slashing and uncompromising speeches,” wrote Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt (October 21), “and if more of our people had gone for Joe as you and I did we should have made a better thing of the contest.”

It was a sufficiently disastrous thing. “Khaki” swept the country triumphantly, and the Government came back in formidable strength, the figures being :

Conservatives . . . . .	334
Liberal Unionists . . . . .	68
Liberal and Labour . . . . .	186
Nationalists . . . . .	82

So far from healing the differences within the Liberal Party the overthrow had emphasized them, and the Liberal Imperial League arrived at a policy of proscription. A resolution passed by the Liberal Imperial Council declared that the time had come

to clearly and permanently distinguish Liberals in whose policy with regard to Imperial questions patriotic voters may justly repose confidence from those whose opinions naturally disqualify them from controlling the action of the Imperial Parliament of a world-wide community of nations.

This declaration of war meant the elimination of Campbell-Bannerman. “I am making a declaration of loyalty to C.-B.,” wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. “I think he has deserved it, and he is the only buffer against the Perks conspiracy who are longing to dismiss him, which they shall not do if I can help it. I think Joe himself must by this time have become aware that he has ‘over-egged the pudding.’ How his temper bewrays him. His nature is that of a bully. He showed it before in his violence in 1880 and 1885 and again in 1892.”

The attempt of the Liberal Imperialists to stampede the

never have known that the British Empire would survive Mr. Chamberlain. This was really the intoxication of a man after a debauch of vanity. They knew the fable of the frog who swelled itself out to imitate the ox, and said, “When I burst the ox will still remain.”

position ended ingloriously. "You will have seen that Imperial Perks and the silly old Brassey were only able to collect half-a-dozen M.P.'s at their banquet out of the hundreds they claim," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley. A proposal to petition Lord Rosebery to return to the leadership of the Party also fell flat, and Campbell-Bannerman, with whom Harcourt was in close communication, remained in official control. Harcourt indicated his readiness to act in co-operation with "C.-B." under his leadership, but this would have meant increased difficulties with the Imperialists, and Campbell-Bannerman wisely determined that "things should be left as they are"—that is, that the official party should be detached from the Rosebery Imperialists on the one side and the Harcourt anti-war party on the other until the situation cleared.

## II

The election was hardly over before it became obvious that triumph in South Africa was still a long way off, and that Roberts's arrival at Pretoria, so far from ending the war, had only changed its character. The Boers had sued for peace when Roberts entered their capital; but the proposal had been rejected, the frame of mind of the Government being that of "unconditional surrender." After the election, when the exploits of De Wet began to fill the newspapers, and the return of Roberts was again postponed, it was apparent that the conclusion of the struggle was remote. The new Parliament met in December to vote supply and to face the melancholy fact that the election had been won on entirely false hopes. Harcourt, while supporting the war expenditure, denounced the conduct of the war and the miscalculations of the Government. They had thought the war was over when Mafeking, Ladysmith and Kimberley were relieved. They had thought it was over when Pretoria was entered. They had thought they were making war on President Kruger and not on the Dutch nation. The guerilla war had proved that it was a conflict of nations, and that was a much more serious thing:

No doubt (he said) we ought to give you the money. But the House of Commons and the country will think that the time has come when, having to deal not with Governments which you may overthrow with overwhelming forces, but with a race, a brave race, living in a country which is their own, they will see that it is not by accumulating forces, not by perpetually increasing expenditure of money and armed men, but by a different policy that this matter will be settled. . . . You may depend upon it that on your future dealings with these people whom you have conquered will depend your reputation with the civilized world. . . .

On the question of the taxation of the natives to pay for the war, a proposal suggested by Rhodes, he was emphatic and scornful. They would not mend matters by adding a native rebellion to their troubles. He made great play in Parliament and in the Press with the hostility of the mine-owners to the "suicidal" notion of taxing the mines to pay for the cost of the war. They had wanted the war not in order to have higher taxation, but to have lower taxation, "The Boers could not pay (for the war), the mine-owners would not pay; but the natives should." Harcourt insisted that the only source of wealth in the Transvaal was the mines, and that they should bear their share of the burden. a subject on which he carried on a spirited controversy with J. B. Robinson, the South African mine-owner, in the columns of *The Times*.

The New Year opened with a score for the anti-Imperialists of the Liberal Party. Writing to Mr. Morley to wish him "the best of new centuries," Harcourt, who had been laid aside with bronchial trouble, referred to "the announcement that the *Daily News* has changed hands and is to be delivered from the Perksites and restored to the ancient faith, Cook of Berkeley Square being shunted." "The money for the purchase," replied Mr. Morley, "is mainly found by Thomasson and Cadbury, with one or two others, and they hope to raise more elsewhere. The chief engineer in the operation has been Lloyd George. They desired me to be political director—but this I told them was not to be entertained for a moment." The transfer of the *Daily News* gave the anti-Imperialists a powerful voice

in the morning Press. "We shall now have something besides the *Westminster Gazette* that we can read," wrote Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt. Events were consolidating the Left and the Centre of the Party, and on the eve of the meeting of Parliament Harcourt found Campbell-Bannerman "full of fight and with a much stiffened back," declaring that he was tired of "trying to accommodate everybody by paring down a phrase here and a proposal there until nothing was left," and that he meant "to take my own line and they [the Liberal Imperialists] may o what they like."

The Session of 1901 opened under the shadow of national mourning. After a reign of unprecedented duration Queen Victoria had passed away. The event, falling on the threshold of the new century and in the midst of a war that had passed into a phase of lingering weariness, marked very definitely the end of an epoch, and Harcourt felt the break acutely. Writing to the new King a letter of condolence, he said, "I am amongst the few still surviving who can recall the day of her [Victoria's] accession, and whose recollection covers the whole course of her great reign. The memory will remain to the last hour of my life of Her singular kindness to me in private and Her gracious indulgence in the relations of official life which were permitted to me." His relations with the Queen had not been unclouded. He had not hesitated when at the Home Office to risk her displeasure in the administration of the royal clemency, and his spacious manner and high spirits did not quite conform to the severe decorum of the royal household. But on the whole the Queen and he had been on excellent terms, exchanged many little gifts, and had had many mutual memories, centring for the most part in Harcourt's grandfather. The wreath which Harcourt and his wife sent to the funeral was inscribed, "In veneration of a noble and glorious reign and in grateful memory of long years of gracious personal kindness." At the meeting at the Mansion House in support of a national memorial to the late Queen he, in the absence of Campbell-Bannerman, represented the Liberal

Party, and commented on the poverty of London's memorials of its great dead. "I hardly know of one," he said, "which is worthy of the greatness of this Empire or the greatness of this City." He pleaded for a new departure worthy of the occasion. Whether or not he pleaded with success will be apparent to those who look upon the confection in front of Buckingham Palace to-day.

By this time it was evident that a grave blunder had been made in not concluding peace with the Boers in the previous June, when Roberts had declared that his terms were "unconditional surrender." Chamberlain in the debate on the Address now sought to explain that "unconditional surrender" did not refer to the forces, but, only to the claim to independence. The men were to be permitted to retire to their farms unmolested.

"And the officers?" interjected Harcourt.

"And the officers, certainly," replied Chamberlain.

It was a daring reply, and Harcourt, who never missed an occasion for returning to the loss of the opportunity of peace which kept the war alive for nearly two years, promptly exposed the audacity of the statement in a letter to *The Times*:

. . . I interjected the question whether the terms referred to as offered to "all the members of the force" applied to the commanding officers as well as the men. With that hardihood of assertion, with which Mr. Chamberlain replaces alike facts and arguments, he replied without hesitation, "And the officers, certainly." Now, Sir, if there is any fact more notorious than another in the whole miserable catalogue of blunders which have characterized throughout this ill-omened war it is that in the terms of surrender offered to the troops the officers were expressly excepted.

He then went through the despatches, quoting Roberts's specific instruction to Buller on June 3 that principal officers and officers who had "commanded positions of the Republican forces or who had taken an active part in the policy which brought about the war" were excluded from the offer of freedom. "It is obvious," he said, "that as regards all the principal officers, like Botha and De Wet, these were terms of 'unconditional *personal* surrender.' They were

to be at the absolute discretion of the victors who were to deal with them as they thought fit—to send them to St. Helena or Ceylon or elsewhere. The accuracy of Mr. Chamberlain's reply to me, 'And the officers, certainly,' may be judged from this recorded correspondence." And he asked was it likely that men like the Boers would consent on such terms to abandon their chiefs? "Such was the manner," he concluded, "in which the war was prolonged."

During the spring Harcourt, in spite of increasing bronchial trouble, was much in the House, and a few extracts from his letters to Loulou, who was travelling with his wife in the Medjterranean, will indicate his activities and his spirit in the pursuit of them :

*March 15.*— . . . I had a good day in the H. of C. yesterday on the motion for Committee on Army estimates. C.-B. was quite sound in his argument but not sound in his wind, as he had a bad cold and was hardly audible, so I thought it right after dinner to reinforce the attack and I think with success, as people say I was in excellent voice, which is more than I expected, as I have had a good deal of cough lately, but it comes and goes by fits and starts, and I was happily free last night. Indeed I always get better like an old post-horse when I am once on my legs. The Party seemed pleased and satisfied. . . .

*March 20.*— . . . To-day we had a great field-day on temperance. We carried the Children Liquor Bill by 372 to 54. The Government cut a ridiculous figure, Jesse Collings being their spokesman in the absence of Ritchie. I followed, and cut him up to the satisfaction of both sides. . . .

*March 29.*— . . . As to politics—I have been doing a good deal of "leading" this last fortnight with ease to myself and satisfaction I think to the Party. C.-B. has been laid up and not able to be at the House, and I have taken the reins altogether in my own hands. The Government have given several very good openings and we have rattled them about well. . . . Altogether he [Mr. Balfour] has fallen into fearful disrepute in the House of Commons, and especially with his own Party. It is like the Education Bill of 1896 over again. People are all saying he is done for, but I know these things blow over. At all events I do not wish to kill him to make room for Joe.

I had prime sport with Quilter and Chaplin over the *Pure Beer Bill* with the *Pure* struck out. . . .

In the debates on the Finance Bill, Harcourt got in many thrusts on the conduct and effect of the war. "The amount of the evil," he said in one of his speeches, "may be measured by the total financial Bill now under consideration—a debt of £150,000,000 and the largest army that ever was collected to meet the smallest foe since the days of Xerxes." He was jovial over the quiescence of the Liberal Imperialists, but in June the domestic quarrel burst out in an aggravated form under the influence of the new policy of the concentration camps. At a dinner of the National Reform Union on June 14, at which Harcourt denounced those who applied to war the maxim of the prize ring, "a fight to the finish," Campbell-Bannerman first used his memorable phrase "methods of barbarism" in reference to the concentration camps, and four days later Mr. Lloyd George raised the issue in the House. Writing to his son, Harcourt said :

20, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, S.W., *June 18, 1901.*—The doves of the gentlemen whom C.-B. calls the Lib.-Imps. were much fluttered by Lloyd George's motion on the refugee camps. They are evidently much incensed at our Friday meeting, especially at the reception of J. Morley, and Lloyd George's motion gave them the opportunity to show their displeasure.

Fowler went out, having it is said paired for the Government. After much colloquy in the lobby, Asquith, E. Grey, Munro-Ferguson, McArthur walked out, having put up Haldane to speak for them, he being howled down by our people. Of course Lawson, Walton, Norman, Reid and others went with them.

How many abstained I do not exactly know. I see Massingham puts them at 30. *The Times* number of 50 is certainly greatly exaggerated. About 70 voted with C.-B. . . . On the whole I think the result good, as we could not have had a better subject on which to take issue, and the clear majority of the Party went with us. It would have perhaps been better if the motion had been made by J. Ellis rather than Lloyd George, who is a red rag to a good many of the Lib.-Imps., as Fowler is to our people. But anything is better than doing nothing.

The revival of the conflict was so serious that a meeting of the Liberal members under the presidency of Campbell-Bannerman was summoned at the Reform Club to consider the position, and a resolution of confidence in "C.-B.'s" leadership was proposed and adopted. Harcourt and others

spoke, but the chief interest of the meeting was the declaration of Mr. Asquith that the cliques in the Party, if they existed, existed without his consent :

. . . And, Sir (he said), nothing has surprised and pained me more in the whole of my political life than that I should have been supposed capable, under the pretext of performing a public duty, and, as I have seen it kindly suggested, for the purpose of winning the transient applause of the Tory press—I should have been supposed capable of lending myself to an intrigue to oust from the leadership of our Party one by whose side I have sat for years, whose counsels and confidence I have shared, and whose exertions in one of the most thankless tasks ever allotted to a man I have warmly appreciated and to the best of my powers and opportunities consistently supported.

But no sooner was unity—on the unstable basis of allegiance to the leader and complete liberty to dissent from him with regard to the one vital question before the country—proclaimed than Lord Rosebery made a characteristic incursion into the field with a letter to the City Liberal Club, which, in the language of *The Times*, put an end to the fiction of Radical unity "by declaring that the opposed schools, the insular view and the Imperial view, could not be reconciled." At the City Liberal Club two days later (July 19) Lord Rosebery once more repeated that nothing would induce him to return to the Liberal Party. "I must plough my furrow alone," he said. "That is my fate, agreeable or the reverse ; but it is possible that, before I get to the end of the furrow, I may find myself not alone." With this renewed assurance of his loneliness, he disappeared once more, leaving his faithful bodyguard still forlornly fighting. It would be unprofitable and tiresome to pursue the story in detail, with its "war to the knife-and-fork" as it was called—in reference to the dinner to Mr. Asquith as a counterblast to the dinner of the National Reform Union—and the election in Lanarkshire in which the Imperialist Liberal candidate was defeated by the Tory, with the help and concurrence of many Liberals. Through all this unhappy controversy, with its naggings and irritations, Harcourt was constantly urging patience. "We have only



to sit tight and, as the racing men say, the 'horses are bound to come back to us' " was his refrain. "I do not share Tweedmouth's despondency," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 21). "He seems to regard the game as having resolved itself into a *stalemate*, but as Bismarck said *beati possidentes* and if C.-B. will only stick to it he will be *beatus*." His confidence in Campbell-Bannerman was unflinching. "I sent my 'cram' to C.-B. a few days ago," he wrote to Mr. Morley (October 25). "He has the merit of generally being better than one expects." He sent 'cram' also to Mr. Morley, who was speaking in Scotland, adding as a footnote:

W. IV. to Codrington before Navarino: "Go it, Ned."

W. V. H. to J. M.: "Go it, John."

The proclamation of August 8 had introduced a new element in the discussion of the war. It declared that as the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were now parts of the British Empire the Boer officers who were still maintaining their resistance were no longer entitled to belligerent rights, and that unless they surrendered before September 15 they would be permanently exiled from South Africa. Harcourt had assailed the proclamation in Parliament as bad in policy and contrary to international law. He maintained that:

The combatants in arms (belonging to the two Republics, not to the Cape Colony) were regular belligerents entitled to all the rights of prisoners of war when captured, and that a claim to banish them and confiscate their property was not a lawful proceeding. The Commandants Botha, De Wet, etc. are not and never have been British subjects and cannot be treated as such. They are not rebels, but enemies, and must be treated as such. Their origins naturally cannot be extinguished by a mere proclamation of annexation, nor can their status be changed except either by their surrender on a general peace or by an exclusive and effective occupation of the whole territory such as does not exist.

On this point he was at issue with Mr. Asquith, who declined to say that the proclamation was contrary to the laws of war, though he did not agree with the policy and did not think it would induce the Boers in the field to surrender. Harcourt returned to the subject later in reply to

Chamberlain's threat of "greater severities," and his use of the example of Poland and the Caucasus. "There is no condemnation of severities against guerrilla forces," he said, writing to Mr. Morley (October 26), "more decisive than that of the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular War, and their rights as lawful combatants were emphatically reserved both in the Russian Conference of 1874 and at the Hague." Writing to *The Times* (November 8) on the statement of Lord Milner "that in a formal sense the war may never be over," he surveyed at great length the causes of failure. One passage will serve to show the scope of his indictment :

. . . The significant part of this deplorable business is that from the first to the last the pessimists have been more than right and the optimists have been more than wrong. But even Lord Milner himself seems beginning to be alive to the real facts of the situation. We were first told that, if we would only show our teeth and menace enough war, there would be no war, and the Boers would not fight, and so the war broke out. We were assured that the war would be a mere military promenade to be settled by 10,000 men and as few millions. • We have sent out 300,000 men, out of whom the "unreturning brave" have been decimated by death and disease. We were informed on careful calculation that the whole fighting force the Boers could raise did not amount to 40,000 men—less than the whole number of the prisoners of war. Without doubt after the capture of Pretoria the whole resistance was soon to collapse—and Lord Roberts returned to verify the prediction. But from that moment demands for thousands more men were so urgent that recruits—like those of Falstaff at Coventry—were hurried to the front. We were invited to be confident that, if we only burned farms enough, destroyed the flocks and herds, laid waste the whole country, and carried off the wives and families of the Boers and half-starved those who belonged to combatants in arms, the spirit of the Boers would be finally broken—but the resistance only waxed the fiercer. Forty-one futile proclamations were issued, and still the Boers fought on. A final effort was attempted (the last and most imbecile of all), which menaced the leaders with banishment and the followers with confiscation—a threat which every man of sense predicted would be treated with contempt, as is now admitted to be the case—not to mention that they were bogus threats illegal in themselves and incapable of execution. How obstinate are these delusions continuously practised on the country is proved by the latest declarations of the Government. On August 14, in the last moments of the session, I invited Mr. Chamberlain to give to Parliament some information as to the condition of the war. His reply

was—" I stated no later than Friday last all we knew of the present position and the grounds for anticipating that it would be within the power of the Commander-in-Chief to send home a considerable number of troops at the termination of the winter campaign." This was the accurate information, I suppose, derived from the " men on the spot " on whom the Government implicitly rely, and upon whom they are always very anxious to devolve all responsibility. I confess I shudder when I hear the Government proclaim they are about to bring home troops. The return of Lord Roberts and the C.I.V. was only the prelude for demands for fresh levies. Mr. Chamberlain, in the middle of August, expects to " send home a considerable number of troops at the end of the winter campaign." Well, the winter in South Africa was over in September, but not the winter campaign ; it continues fiercer than ever in the spring, and, so far from troops being brought home, large contingents of more efficient troops are peremptorily called for, and the " informal " war seems to be more deadly and further than ever from an end. . . .

In a further letter he returned to the subject of the guerilla war, and argued for a real attempt at peace based on amnesty, and, if independence was surrendered, substantial security for Boer interests against confiscation and against the extrusion of one race for the settlement of another. All through the autumn and winter the struggle between the two sections of the Liberal Party continued, and Harcourt's correspondence with Mr. Morley, Campbell-Bannerman and Spencer followed day by day the changing features of the manœuvres. The " veiled prophet " or the " dark horse " as Lord Rosebery was variously called, continued to be the centre of speculation. He still remained outside the Liberal Party ; but on the other hand he was also outside the Liberal Imperial League which existed to support his views. Sometimes it seemed that he was going to denounce the Government, in which case, asked Harcourt, what was to become of the " Perksites " (the Liberal Imperialists), who supported the Government ? Sometimes it seemed that he aimed at " a Rosebery-Chamberlain combination at the head of a National Party." Generally, however, it seemed idle to speculate on so incalculable a subject. Writing to Mr. Morley, Harcourt said (November 10) :

. . . He has probably not yet made up his " month's mind," and will change it every week before he speaks. If he goes in for con-

ciliation and against the Government, I, as you know, bear no public malice, and shall co-operate with him or any one else who will take this course. Chatham (from whom he believes the mantle has descended to him), by his wayward conduct in the American War and his refusal to support the Rockingham Whigs, ruined the Opposition and destroyed his own influence. But I think his genius resembles a good deal more that of Charles Townshend than that of Pitt. . . .

"Really the world grows sillier every day," he wrote to Spencer apropos of "the figure of fun Rosebery is making of himself, advertising himself for a great political revelation six weeks in advance." The "revelation" duly came in the "clean slate" speech at Chesterfield. A fortnight earlier the General Committee of the National Liberal Federation at Derby had adopted a resolution in favour of honourable terms of peace being put forward and a mission being sent out to arrange peace. As such a Commission involved the supersession of Lord Milner, this resolution was opposed by the Liberal Imperialists, and Sir E. Grey at Bristol expressed the opinion that the recall of Lord Milner would have disastrous effects. Thus the cleavage in the Liberal Party was once more aggravated. Harcourt watched events with equanimity. The Government had modified their policy in regard to the concentration camps, public opinion was swinging round to peace, and "C.-B." was firmly in the saddle. Writing to Mr. Morley, he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

MALWOOD, LYNTHURST, December 8, 1901.— . . . I was glad not to be present at the Guildhall to grace the triumph of Joe. I quite agree that the Prince of Wales's speech made what they call in Scotland a very "fine appearance," of which I am glad for all reasons. He is sensible, simple and attractive. I had a charming letter from him in reply to one of congratulation on his return, in which he spoke gracefully of the Colonials as "my fellow subjects."

I am watching events from my sheltered observatory with amusement and philanthropy. I speculate neither on the variation of the weather nor the opinions of Rosebery. I think Derby a very wholesome reaction and it will puzzle a good many gentlemen how to set their sails to it.

C.-B. is finally fixed in the motor machine of the Party, and Perks and Co. will find it impossible to displace him.

I disapprove of cross bench minds and corner seats only fit for Jack Horner saying "What a good boy am I." I feel more disposed to be chauffeur to the automobile.

C.-B. speaks on Tuesday. He wrote to me to suggest hinting at armistice. I did not encourage this, as it would be regarded as a direct interference with the military successes and *mal vuë* at the moment. . . . I wish him to stick to negotiations, amnesty, and new negotiations. . . .

I doubt if R. will offer Asquith a promising future. He will have all the Tories and most of the Radicals against him. R. is more likely to look forward to a Chamberlain alliance on the departure of Salisbury. We can then heartily wish him *bon voyage*.

In the midst of all the marchings and counter-marchings of the two factions came the Rosebery deliverance at Chesterfield on December 16, with his call for "a clean slate," and his declaration that he would not work with the Liberal Party except on what may be called coalition terms. The significance of the occasion was emphasized by the presence on the Rosebery platform of Fowler, Sir E. Grey\* and Mr. Asquith. The deliverance created an immense reverberation throughout the political world. "That settles the question so far as he [Lord Rosebery] is concerned," wrote Harcourt to his sister. "It remains to be seen what Asquith, Grey and Co. will do. C.-B. stands firm and I shall do all in my power to support him." Mr. Morley was on a visit to Harcourt at Malwood when the speech was made, and writing to Lewis Harcourt of their joint views on it, Harcourt said :

December 17.— . . . I pointed out to him [Mr. Morley], and he concurred, that the main point of condemnation was the first chapter of "advice to the Liberal Party" which is contained in the "clean slate." All the traditions, the pledges and the faiths of the Liberal Party to be wiped out. Nothing to be preserved but what we are sure to carry, i.e., nothing to which we cannot secure the consent of the House of Lords!! Fancy this doctrine applied to the former history of the Liberal Party in respect of Catholic emancipation, parliamentary reform, free trade, &c. It is in fact to throw everything overboard in order to get back to office by adopting that which is popular at the moment. . . . The whole language is insulting to

the whole past of the Liberal Party and a betrayal of its growth in the future. . . .

There followed the famous interview between Campbell-Bannerman and Lord Rosebery in Berkeley Square, which "C.-B." described in a letter to Harcourt :

*Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.*

LORD WARDEN HOTEL, DOVER, December 23, 1901.— . . . I propounded the great enquiry, what does it all mean ? and I gathered that it does not mean what the quidnuncs suppose. He has left the L. Party five or six years ago : he is not (in ecclesiastical phrase) " in communion with us " ; active co-operation is impossible. Ireland especially stands in the way. All the phrases—phylacteries—shibboleths, clean slate, etc.—merely mean a shaking off of the fetters of the Newcastle programme. Is astonished to hear of the similarity of language of Sidney Webb and his school.

On the war, is not aware what other people have been saying ; took his own line. Is against Milner, against the policy of harshness, *believes he himself could make peace to-morrow.*

What did he mean when he said he would do all in his power ? This was if the *country* called on him, not the *Party*. His cards are on the table. Is he going to play them ? Yes, by activity in the House of Lords.

The conclusion is no change, no return, no coalition with old friends.

All this very amiably and quietly stated.

I neither urged nor even suggested anything ; merely made enquiries as to the meaning of things. . . .

*J'y suis, j'y reste.*

Weeks of feverish discussion in public and in private ensued. Mr. Asquith and Sir E. Grey spoke approvingly of the Chesterfield deliverance, but Lord Rosebery's declaration that he was " out of communion " with the Liberal Party seemed to make any idea of unity impossible. " I had this morning (December 29) a very friendly note from R., but he distinctly declares against union with any of us," wrote Spencer to Harcourt. It was not even clear that he had not cut himself adrift from the Liberal Imperial League. " The next word evidently lies with the Perksites," wrote Harcourt to Campbell-Bannerman. " It will be for them to say whether they are ' knights of the clean slate '—whether they too mean to refuse co-operation with the Liberal

Party and to expunge Ireland and Wales from its volume and to delete peace, retrenchment and reform." Campbell-Bannerman, with his customary phlegm, reserved his public comment on Chesterfield until the temper cooled. He was sincerely anxious for the return of Lord Rosebery, and was indisposed to make co-operation difficult in so far as the war at all events was concerned. But he had no intention of modifying his attitude in regard to the war. Writing to Harcourt, he said :

*Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.*

DOVER, January 2, 1902.— . . . Another most important thing has happened since I last wrote.

Grey wrote to Herbert [Gladstone], and Herbert in indignation at once wrote expostulating with him, and begged me not to take Grey's letter (which he let me see) as final till he had a reply.

I have therefore not troubled you about it, but as the reply does not turn up I will now tell you what Grey says.

He says that he is entirely in accord with R.'s view, and that that view counters me on four vital points—

M. Law [martial law].

Cruelties [concentration camps].

Offer of terms [overtures to Boers].

Milner [recall of Lord Milner].

I must now accept R.'s view, and recant my errors, or Grey will repudiate my leadership. And he finds it " tragic " to think how different the position of the Party would have been had R.'s view been earlier taken, and the anti-national tone repressed.

I call it d-d egotism and impertinence. Then Ronald F. [? Ferguson] has been making speeches calling on the Liberals to elect between R. and me on the same four points—thus shewing a concerted plan.

I have made ineffectual attempts through Sinclair and Herbert to get at Asquith and find out his attitude.

When you put this with the spade drill, there can be but one meaning.

Is there then no danger in the St. James's Hall meeting ?

While they are digging and entrenching, that meeting can hardly be the scene of an eirenicon.

" My own impression now is that we are in sight of the split overt," wrote Mr. Morley (January 2) to Harcourt. " I do not think the game of the seceders is to overthrow C.-B. *at this moment*, but to take occasion *to trip him up*,"

replied Harcourt. "Their 'spade-work' will be that of the mole, and the chief digger will be Haldane." Meanwhile he was writing to Campbell-Bannerman urging him at the coming St. James's Hall meeting to "point out the things on which he agrees with Rosebery as to the war and repudiate the 'clean slate.'" He drafted<sup>1</sup> ingenious heads for "C.-B." to show that Sir E. Grey's four points could all be reconciled both with the Rosebery and the "C. B." remarks on those controversial subjects. "I cannot thank you enough for them" (the notes), wrote Campbell-Bannerman. "They have been of immense help." In his speech at St. James's Hall on January 13 he took the line suggested by Harcourt, emphasizing the points of agreement on the war, generally holding out the olive branch; but standing firm on essentials and on domestic policy.

When Parliament met three days later the position within the Liberal Party was still chaotic; but Campbell-Bannerman was determined to have a war amendment to the Address if he had "to be his own teller." Harcourt, of course, shared his view that the time had come to force the fight for peace, and was in daily attendance at the House. On the opening day he delivered a speech mainly directed against the suspension of the constitution in Cape Colony. He discussed the subject chiefly from its legal aspect. "I don't care a scrap for the legal arguments on either side," retorted Chamberlain. "We are face to face with rebellion." Harcourt's next intervention was to rally all sections of the Opposition to the attack. The Cawley amendment to the Address had disclosed the distracted state of the Opposition. It was too weak to satisfy the anti-war Liberals, and it was doubtful whether it was not too strong for the Imperialist Liberals. Mr. Asquith was absent, unwell. Sir Edward Grey sat below the gallery in isolation from the

<sup>1</sup> He was at this time at Canford Manor, Wimborne, from whence in a letter to Lewis Harcourt he made the following interesting comment: "I find Lord Wimborne very anti-Government, full of plans for a third party with a view to overthrowing them, inspired, I believe, by Winston [Churchill]. I fancy Lord R. is cultivating that young gentleman a good deal."



councils of his nominal chief and his Party. Campbell-Bannerman himself was at the end of his resources.' He had done his best for unity, and his attempt had failed. In this desperate situation Harcourt came to the rescue. His aim was to show that on the question of peace and war there was essential agreement between Lord Roseberry and "C.-B.," and essential disagreement between both and Chamberlain. For the moment, he was a Roseberyite with the best. The practical question of the hour, he insisted, was the conclusion of the war with honour and safety to the country. That end could not be attained by "the impious" course of "unconditional submission," by the utter extinction of a nationality. This was really the policy of the Government against the Chesterfield demand for peace on terms. By quotation after quotation he showed the essential conflict between the Rosebery position and the Chamberlain position, driving home the point that the Liberal Imperialists in abstaining from voting would desert not Campbell-Bannerman simply, but their own leader, Lord Rosebery. It was a gallant attempt to bring the "Lib.-Imps." into line with the official Liberals and to secure a common front on the war. Of all Lord Rosebery's triumphs, said Mr. Balfour in replying to Harcourt, the greatest was surely that Sir William devoted three parts of his speech to showing how entirely he agreed with him. He had always thought the Chesterfield speech was a good one; but had never realized how good it was until he heard Harcourt's speech. It was good chaff; but it did not obliterate the force of Harcourt's appeal to the Liberal Imperialists. He had throughout accepted the Chesterfield speech as a great advance to accommodation on the subject of the war: it was its "clean slate" aspect that he repudiated.

But what the *Observer* called Harcourt's "patient, plodding endeavour to preserve the unity of the Party" was in vain. In a speech at Leicester Campbell-Bannerman made a friendly overture to Lord Rosebery. "I do not know," he said, "down to this moment of my speaking to

you whether Lord Rosebery speaks to me from the interior of our tabernacle or from some vantage ground outside. I practically put that question publicly to him a month ago, but he does not answer it, and I frankly say I do not think it is quite fair to me not to do so." Thereupon Lord Rosebery issued a letter in which he said :

. . . Speaking pontifically within his " tabernacle " last night he [Campbell-Bannerman] anathematized my declarations on the " clean slate " and Home Rule. It is obvious that our views on the war and its methods are not less discordant. I remain, therefore, outside his tabernacle, but not I think in solitude. . . .

With this 'public repudiation Campbell-Bannerman's position became increasingly painful.

The declaration at the Reform Club of the loyalty of the Party to his leadership had lost its reality. He was left isolated by his nominal colleagues on the front bench. Since his retirement from official association with the Party, Harcourt had sat at the end of the bench ; but after the issue of the Rosebery letter he could bear the spectacle of 'C.-B.' s loneliness no longer. " Up to last night [February 21] he always stopped short of crossing the line marked by the brass-bound box," said Sir Henry Lucy in the *Observer*. " In the new and crushing blow that has fallen on the Party Sir William found irresistible the call for personal sympathy. . . . There was C.-B. forlorn on the front bench, with his old colleague and sometime deputy, Mr. Asquith, scrupulously seated apart. When Sir William, entering from behind the Speaker's chair, lifted up his eyes from afar and beheld his successor in the leadership, he halted on his way to his accustomed place, and seated himself on Sir Henry's right hand." Writing next day to his sister, Harcourt said : " The Rosebery rupture has made my attendance in the H. of C. necessarily very close and very constant, generally nine hours without interruption four days a week to support Campbell-Bannerman against the men who are seeking to overthrow him. I am glad to know that the great body of the Party are loyal to him and that Lord R. is making no way."

The disunion was now publicly proclaimed, and the Liberal League came into being with Lord Rosebery as President, and Mr. Asquith, Sir E. Grey and Fowler as vice-presidents. "The new birth of this morning," wrote Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt (February 27), "has been taken philosophically: rather with laughter than with tears—and most men can't make out what it means and what the 'policy' really is." Lord Rosebery inaugurated the new League in a speech at Glasgow. "A more empty, ineffective and uninteresting speech I never read," was Harcourt's placid comment to Mr. Morley, to whom he sent points for his coming reply at Manchester.

But if confusion was becoming worse confounded in the Liberal camp, peace was near elsewhere. The country was weary of an inglorious struggle and men's thoughts were turning to the coming coronation. "To-day," wrote Harcourt to Mr. Morley (May 23rd), "is the critical day when the Cabinet is sitting as to peace and I cannot but hope and believe that peace will come in spite of Chamberlain and Milner. . . . I think J.C.'s last speech was the most odious and atrocious he has ever made." Harcourt's hope was realized. The peace of Vereeniging was concluded, and the public, released from the long nightmare of the war, prepared for the coming ceremonial. It was delayed by the illness of the King; but the Coronation honours were published in May. There had been a widespread belief that Harcourt would appear in the list, but his name was absent. The following correspondence explains its absence:

*King Edward to Harcourt.*

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, May 23, 1902.—MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT,—In conferring honours on the occasion of my Coronation, I am anxious that they should be as far as possible of a national and not a party nature.

Under these circumstances it will give me great pleasure to hear you are willing to accept a peerage from me—and I make you this offer both on national and personal grounds in recognition of your services to the State and of the high offices which you have filled.

I would propose that the creation should be a viscountcy, and I

may add that my offer has received the cordial approval of Lord Salisbury.

Believe me,  
My dear Sir William,  
Sincerely yours,  
(Signed) EDWARD R.

*Harcourt to King Edward.*

May, 1902.—Sir William Harcourt has received with the deepest sense of gratitude Your Majesty's most gracious letter offering to confer upon him the high honour of a peerage on the auspicious celebration of Your Majesty's coronation.

'The terms of kind condescension in which that offer is conveyed add if possible to the grace of the honour proposed.

They evidence that noble sentiment of national as distinguished from party interests which has both before and since Your Majesty's accession to the Throne ever governed your conduct towards all your faithful servants and subjects.

That the humble and imperfect services which Sir William Harcourt has endeavoured to render to the Crown during a long public life should have been deemed worthy of Your Majesty's recognition—to which the King has been pleased to add the valued words of "personal grounds"—is a mark of favour which more than repays the labour of a lifetime, and will be treasured hereafter as a precious memory by his family and his friends.

Sir William Harcourt trusts however that he will not be regarded as unworthy or insensible of Your Majesty's great goodness if he feels compelled to say that after thirty-four years spent in the House of Commons he feels unable to leave it for another scene than that in which he has passed his life and in which he may still hope for a brief period to render some service to the Empire under Your Majesty's glorious reign, which is inaugurated under such happy omens.

*King Edward to Harcourt.*

BUCKINGHAM PALACE, May 26, 1902.—MY DEAR SIR WILLIAM,—Let me thank you for your kind letter received this morning.

Though I much regret that you are unable to accept the peerage, I quite understand and appreciate the reasons you have given and unwillingness to sever your connection with the House of Commons, of which you have been so distinguished a member for thirty-four years.

Believe me,  
Very sincerely yours,  
(Signed) EDWARD R.

"I really could not bear to leave the H. of C. until I had made up my mind to leave public life for good and'all," wrote Harcourt to his sister. "I should not have known what to do with myself in the other place, and to have left the Liberal Party in the lurch in the House of Commons in its present low condition would have seemed to me an unjustifiable desertion by an officer of the troops in danger and difficulty. I, of course, telegraphed for Loulou as soon as I received the King's letter, and found he was (as he always is) of like mind with me on the matter. And I hope for him a House of Commons career when I am gone." His decision delighted his colleagues. "The more I think of it," wrote Campbell-Bannerman to him (May 27), "the more worthy of admiration and gratitude does your action appear. Pluck and public spirit are not dead among us yet! I did not say enough at the time, being somewhat dazzled, but believe me, apart from the general interest, I am deeply thankful on my own account." Wilfrid Lawson expressed the general feeling of the Party in the following lines addressed to Harcourt:

To our hearts the old Liberal Chieftain is dear  
And still dearer 'mid days that are cheerless,  
We'd have heartily hailed him if turned to a peer  
But to-night we acclaim him as peerless.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### LAST DAYS IN THE HOUSE

The mine-owners and the cost of the War—The tax on corn—Harcourt's stand against the Education Bill—An honorary fellow of Trinity—Failing Health—Chinese labour for the mines—Chamberlain's Tariff Reform campaign—Letters to *The Times*—Reunion in the Liberal Party—Confusion in the Tory camp—Mr. Balfour's pamphlet—Devonshire's resignation—Mr. Asquith's Free Food campaign—Lewis Harcourt in Parliament—Mr. Morley's *Gladstone*—Announces his retirement.

THE story draws to a close. With the end of the war a new landscape opened out in the field of politics. The Khaki election had been fought on the single issue of the war, but the Government, supported by a powerful majority, proceeded to use it for drastic legislative changes. The new policy of Tariff Reform which was to dominate post-war politics and was destined to rend the Unionist Party hardly less profoundly than the war had rent the Liberal Party made an experimental appearance in the Budget, with customs duties of 3*d.* a cwt. on corn and grain, peas, beans and lentils, and 5*d.* a cwt. on flour, prepared meal, etc. But the main subject of the Session was the Education Bill, which was to destroy the School Boards of 1870. Harcourt fought both schemes with unremitting industry. At no period of his career did he reveal more energy and resource than in his resistance to what he regarded as the great back-wash of post-war reaction. Some indication of his activity which, in a man now in his seventy-fifth year, was the admiration of friends and foes alike, is contained in the fact that in the Education Bill alone his name figures 150 times in the records of Hansard. During these debates he was virtually the Leader of the Opposition, for

neither Campbell-Bannerman nor the Liberal Leaguers took much part in the struggle.

It is impossible to follow him in detail throughout the prolonged debates on the war and the peace. He made great play with the illusory promise of the Government that £30,000,000 of the cost of the war would be recovered from the gold mines. He insisted throughout that they would get nothing, and, referring (April 15) to Hicks-Beach's promise, said :

That is not the language of those people in the Transvaal who are chiefly concerned. If you ask the gentlemen who are producing the gold they say, "No, it would be extremely unfair; it would be extremely impolitic to do anything of the kind." They say, "You should not kill the goose that lays the golden eggs." But the bird is not a goose at all. It is a bird of a very different description. It is a bird rather like those described by Burke when he called the nabobs of India in the old days "birds of passage and birds of prey." That is the bird you have to deal with. There are mines, as we know, which are floated not to be worked but to be sold. The money made out of these mines is not a source of wealth. It has been what is called "milked." Mines have been started and they have been sold, and most of their projectors are no longer in the Transvaal at all. . . .

His prophecy was fulfilled. The promised £30,000,000 was never collected. Harcourt in later speeches contrasted this phantom contribution with the tax on food which he called "the blackest spot on the Budget—its most glaring vice." Referring in a speech on May 12 to the fact that one person in forty was in receipt of relief and that for one pauper there were many struggling for the means of life, he said :

And that is why I call this a shabby tax—a tax which is not creditable to a nation of this enormous wealth. . . . I say you ought to resort to any other tax; there is none, whatever may be the objections to it, which would not have been better than this. . . .

You promised old-age pensions. This is the sort of pension that you offer to the aged—to people who can no longer work. They ask you for bread, and you give them a corn-tax. . . .

He knew that in his hostility to the "shabby tax" and all it meant he was expressing the feeling of many opposite,

including the Chancellor of the Exchequer himself. Hicks-Beach was one of the men in the House whom Harcourt most respected, and when he learned that the mutterings of the Chamberlain policy were to end in the disappearance of Hicks-Beach from the Exchequer, he wrote to him (July 15) deeply regretting his passing from an office which he had filled "with such distinction and such unflinching courage. No one is more able than I am (he said) to appreciate the good you have done and still more the evil you have prevented."

• No less vigorous was Harcourt's attack on the Education Bill. He had, as he reminded the House, been in the ranks of the Birmingham Education League when he first entered the House, and he stood by the grand axioms of the League now that its founder, as he said with a wave of his hand towards Chamberlain, had turned against them. The School Boards represented to him a landmark, not merely in education but in the establishment of religious equality, and their destruction in order to weight the scales in favour of denominationalism seemed an infamous step backwards. This, he said, was not an Education Bill; it was a Convocation Bill. It aimed at throwing the whole cost of the maintenance of the denominational schools on the rates and taxes without conferring effective local control on the schools. In Parliament, in the Press and on the platform he fought the Bill throughout the summer and autumn. "Denominationalism," he insisted, "is the true cause of our educational weakness, and the Government's policy is to maintain what is weak in our system and to destroy what is strong." He crossed swords in more than one debate with Lord Hugh Cecil, the brilliant son of his old colleague of the *Saturday Review* and life-long political antagonist. Replying to him on one occasion, he said :

No religious difficulty ! Why, Lord Hugh Cecil is himself a splendid impersonation of it. His objection to the Board School is that it does not attach a child to a denomination, and he prefers the voluntary school because it gives the Church a chance of getting a hold upon the children. That is denominationalism. In other



words, the child is to go in at one door and to come out at the other a highly-finished Churchman. Lord Hugh's alliance between the Churchmen and the Nonconformists can only come about when the parties are on equal terms. As things stand the unregenerate lion may devour the lamb before they lie down together under the millennium. . . .

Apart from the religious issue, he made the strong objection that the new committees would be far too much under the thumb of Whitehall, a criticism which time has justified. "It is a mere abuse of terms," he said in one of his letters to *The Times*, "to call this a self-governing representative authority. It is only a fifth wheel in the coach. The local authority proposes but it is the Board of Education that disposes." If his criticism on the point had been followed perhaps the head masters and mistresses would be able to spend their time on their proper work of the education of the children instead of on filling up forms required by the Education Authority for submission to Whitehall.

During the autumn there was a revival on the part of Campbell-Bannerman of the idea of suggesting a conference with Lord Rosebery. The discontent within the Party had been slightly mitigated by the course of events after the war, but relations were still strained and the attitude of Lord Rosebery remained hostile, and his speech to the Liberal League seemed to forbid any approach from the official leaders. Campbell-Bannerman, however, still hankered after reconciliation, and discussed with Harcourt and Mr. Morley the wisdom of proposing a new conference. It was not proceeded with, Harcourt suggesting the alternative that Campbell-Bannerman should invite E. Grey, Asquith and Fowler to come and discuss which was the course to be taken in the League Convention.

## II

Between the summer and autumn sessions Harcourt made a round of calls, beginning with a visit to his sister at Malvern, proceeding to Harrogate and finishing with a stay with the Londonderrys at Wynyard Park, Stockton-

on-Tees. At the latter place he met Kitchener and had "some pleasant talk with him. He is not at all fierce, but talked very sensibly about South Africa." A proposal from Mr. Morley, who was now engaged on his *Life of Gladstone*, that Harcourt should agree to the publication of the joint memorandum of himself and Spencer on the difficulties at Osborne with the Queen in January 1881 on the subject of the reference to Kandahar in the Queen's Speech,<sup>1</sup> led to a long dissertation from Harcourt on the question of Cabinet proprieties and the publication of secret documents. When, at his urgent request, Mr. Morley decided to forgo publication, he wrote thanking him that "Like Coriolanus you have sacrificed to my personal wish."

Discretion is one of the infirmities of old age (he continued). You have all the privileges of youth and "boys will be boys." I know that I am old-fashioned in my ideas and that I shrink somewhat from "unlicensed printing." I am very un-twentieth century, and wish myself safe back in the eighteenth. What a pity you did not have access to the private correspondence of Robt. Walpole and his billets doux to Q. Caroline.

An honour which pleased him greatly was conferred upon him at this time in the shape of election to an honorary fellowship of his college at Cambridge, Trinity. Writing to Montagu Butler, the Master of Trinity (November 16), he said: "There is no distinction I could have so much coveted as that of an Honorary Fellowship of the Royal and Religious Foundation, to which I owed so much in the days of my youth long ago, and which I place highest in my estimation in my old age."

The sense of old age was now much with him, and his family letters were coloured by the note of farewell. It was always a cheerful note. He had had a glorious day of life, and now that it was drawing to a close he delighted in its memories and still more in the feeling that the happiness he had enjoyed would be continued by those he loved. Writing to Lewis Harcourt on the eve of his fortieth birthday (Jan. 31, 1903), he said:

<sup>1</sup> This document appears in the Appendix to Vol. I of this book.

*Harcourt to his son Lewis.*

. . . Your companionship and devoted aid were the chief support and the means of what success I have had in middle life and your unselfish affection is the comfort of my age.

How few there are who can feel that they have never given their fathers one moment's pain or uneasiness.

My time cannot be long, but I bless God that I have lived to see you established with all the happiness you deserve with a perfect wife and children worthy of you both. Your home is to me an *euthanasia* which is all I could have hoped. And I dwell on the thoughts of another generation which will be as happy as we have been and as you have made my lifetime.

Bless you my darling *child* (for such you are always to me) and for all you have been and done for me.

His letters to his sister Emily at Malvern, with whom he had kept up an unbroken correspondence for fifty years, were full of the glow of an unclouded sunset. They were "toddling down the hill together," but he cheered the journey with the pleasant gossip of those about him, his wife, his children, his grandchildren—"I have never in my life seen a more enchanting pair"—and happy, unregretful reminders of the long past. "Your affection is the dearest treasure of my old age," he said, "and it grows the longer we live." He was jocular even about his infirmities. "I have your pills all safe," he wrote. "Little have they improved by keeping. In honour of you I promise to take two of them to-night, and if I survive will let you know the result." In the spring of 1903 he underwent an operation, and it was feared that his public life was over. The fact revealed the latent affection for him which prevailed among all parties, and the Press teemed with tributes to the splendour of his parliamentary achievements and the warmth and generosity of his nature.

Not the least pleasant public eulogy was that of Lord Rosebery, who said that "he has been, and will long remain, one of the stately and memorable figures of Parliament."

But the operation was successful. "I am quietly surveying the storm at my ease," he wrote to his sister (May 25). "Sleep and eat well, and allow myself to be bored as little as possible. I am now beginning to see company

and have had visits from Lord Spencer, John Morley, and Lord James, and I shall soon begin to invite the ladies to my *ruelle*." When sufficiently recovered, he went with Lady Harcourt to Homburg to recuperate, calling on Pagenstecker, the oculist at Wiesbaden, who assured him (he wrote to his sister) that his defective eye was so much improved that it was as good as that of any man of 20, "which has made me in good spirits."

## III

In spite of his illness in the spring of 1903, the season of that year found Harcourt's activity unabated. The aftermath of the Boer War brought with it acute problems that aroused bitter conflict. Of these the most prominent, and ultimately the most fatal to the Government, was that of labour in the mines. Although the Kruger regime had, at enormous cost of life and treasure, been overthrown, the mine-owners still found themselves with industrial grievances, now mainly concerned with the insufficiency of labour. White labour they did not want. "The refuse and wastrels of this country we will not have at any price, because at 6*d.* a day they would be dear," wrote Mr. Lionel Phillips. On this Harcourt in a letter to *The Times* (February 5) remarked :

. . . That is a frank statement which I imagine will cause some surprise and disappointment to the "honest British workman" who had been encouraged to believe that the new colony which has been acquired at such vast expenditure of blood and of money would afford an outlet for his industry and improve his condition, and that if there were any class of employer who could afford to pay a good price for honest labour it would have been the gold magnates who have accumulated vast fortunes out of the gold mines. . . .

Not only was the white man undesirable ; but the black man was a burden to the community, who refused to work in the mines, with the result that there was a fifty per cent. deficiency of native labour. Harcourt pointed out in a debate in the House (March 24) that the deficiency was due to lowering of wages. The mine-owners had failed to bring down wages to the native under the old administration,

and had now effected a reduction, so that the average wages paid throughout the whole of 1901 had fallen to 31s. a month. The news had spread, and the natives who could live on agriculture had remained in their kraals. There had been an improvement in wages in 1902, but even so the wages did not compare with those paid in other industries. The reason why the mine-owners could not afford to pay more was the policy of opening low-grade mines which were not intended for gold production, but for sale. He denounced the scheme of taxing the natives into the mines. Writing on this subject in *The Times*, he said :

There are questions of vital national importance not to be decided by Park Lane nor even by Downing Street. There are things more precious than gold, and amongst them is the reputation of the British race, both at home and beyond the seas. There is much to be said and much to be done before such an injustice to a defenceless people who have passed under our dominion can be accomplished. I say nothing of the danger of such a policy—though it is perilous enough—I enter my protest against its profound immorality and its lasting disgrace. In the evil days of American slavery it was thought to cloak the ugly word slave by the euphemism of "persons held to labour." No one will be deceived by the delusive phrase of "indirect compulsion," which, in plain terms, is neither more nor less than forced labour. . . .

Meanwhile, dissatisfied with the quality of white labour and insufficiently supplied with black, the mine-owners had raised a demand for the importation of Chinese under conditions which, said Harcourt, "are repugnant to the opinion of every man in this country." Attacked for not putting forward an alternative, he said (*The Times*, February 6) :

You criticize me for offering no positive suggestion for remedying the deficiency of labour. I will venture to offer one. It is a very simple and practical one—to offer not less, but better wages, and to abandon the policy, on which the mine-owners pride themselves, of "standing alone in making an effort to reduce the pre-war rate of pay," under which they managed to secure enormous wealth. . . .

"I expect the gold magnates will be furious," he wrote to Lewis Harcourt, "but I have the whip-hand of them. I have thought it judicious to assume that Joe and Alfred

[Lord Milner] will never do what I know they are contemplating." But in the House a little later Chamberlain came frankly to the defence of the mine-owners, and declared that if the time came for the importation of Asiatic labour neither Harcourt nor the House at large could possibly prevent it. "It is no use mincing matters," he said. "This is not a case in which we can compel our colonies against their will." Harcourt persisted in his opposition to the importation of the Chinese, and repeatedly warned the Government that so odious a policy would be passionately repudiated by the country. He did not live to see the warning fulfilled in the unprecedented overthrow of 1906; but on no subject was his prescience more completely justified by events.

Meanwhile the unity which the Liberals had not been able to effect by their own efforts became a reality with the last phase of Chamberlain's varied and disruptive career. He provided the party he had left with an issue which closed up the ranks as nothing else could close them up. The coming of his whirlwind campaign for Tariff Reform, the new name under which the ancient and discredited policy of Protection assumed an air of novelty, had been preluded in the corn tax of the two preceding years. Hicks-Beach, as we have seen, had gone from the Treasury as the first victim of the new crusade, but his successor, Ritchie, administered a rebuff to the Protectionists by repealing the corn tax, which, though it had been imposed for revenue purposes, was looked on by the Protectionists as the thin end of the wedge of their policy. Harcourt congratulated Ritchie on the repeal of this "infamous" tax; but on May 15, at Birmingham, Chamberlain raised the standard of Imperial Preference, declaring that we must "recover our freedom, resume the power of negotiation, and, if necessary, of retaliation whenever our interests or our relations between our colonies and ourselves are threatened by other people." On the same day, in receiving a deputation of farmers, Mr. Balfour threw cold water on the idea of a preferential scheme to bind together the colonies and the Mother Country. With these two contrary declarations

the breach within the Unionist tabernacle became acute and public, and there followed the amazing duel between Chamberlain and Mr. Balfour that continued until the electoral catastrophe of 1906 destroyed the Birmingham policy. Harcourt was laid aside by his operation at the time of the outbreak of the controversy; but he followed the developments closely from his sick-room, and was in constant communication with Campbell-Bannerman on the subject of tactics in the House.

He rejoiced at the raising of an issue which consolidated the Liberals and broke up the forces of the Government. "It seems to me that Chamberlain had irreparably damaged this Government and that it cannot long survive his dynamite bomb," he wrote to his son. Long-severed ties were knitted afresh. Devonshire, Goschen and James were once more his allies, and to Mr. Asquith he wrote (May 25), "Hicks-Beach came to see me this morning. He is full of fight and quite prepared to lead the opposition to the Chamberlain programme on the Government side of the House."

As soon as he had recovered sufficiently he addressed a gathering of Dorset and Hampshire Liberal Associations at Malwood. Writing to Lewis Harcourt on this gathering, he said:

*Harcourt to his son Lewis.*

MALWOOD, June 28.— . . . You will be amused to hear that I delivered an oration of forty minutes to the South Dorsets really quite in my old form and a good "stock" speech. I told them to stick to the *tax on food* and talk and listen to nothing else. You will see that Balfour is beginning to funk, and pleads that it is not *fundamental*, in which he gets no support from Joe, who knows of course that if that goes all his colonial preference is at an end. On this issue he must be beaten. I made great play of course with the Dorset labour in old times at 7s. a week. There was a man there who said he himself gave before the Repeal 1s. for a quartern loaf and after the Repeal at the same shop he got three loaves for the same money. They all went away much delighted, and it put me in spirits to find I was so fit. . . .

His industrious pen was at work in the Press, and in letters to *The Times* and to correspondents he made devasta-

ting play with " ' My Proposal '—propounded by a single Minister—' a mighty maze without a plan,' a conundrum to be puzzled out by the nation, subject to the interim education of the Prime Minister, who is still ' a child on such matters.' " He ridiculed the idea that tariffs alone could hold the Empire together. " To forecast a future of separation seemed of all things the most absurd, it was self-government that held them together. You might as well take immediate precautions to save the Empire in view of an insurrection of the Primrose League to overthrow the Monarchy."

But it is assumed (he said) that a preferential tariff would prove a bond of permanent union. I believe there can be no greater delusion. Treaties of commerce are notoriously short-lived. One party or the other becomes dissatisfied with their position. There is nothing that people quarrel about so bitterly as love and money. When you come to discussion about pecuniary arrangements in family affairs the most affectionate relations fall out. What is here proposed is not a Customs Union or Zollverein, where there is a single arrangement under a central authority dealing with all commodities on the same footing. What is here proposed is a separate commercial treaty with each distinct self-governing colony, just as if it were a foreign State, under which we shall be bound to create different protective tariffs for the various articles which suit the purposes of each colony—in regard to Canada corn, in respect of New Zealand meat, and so in Australia wool. Not only will there be disputes in each case whether the equivalent either party receives is sufficient, but each colony will question whether what it is to receive is equal in value to that granted to the others. It is obvious that these congeries of preferential treaties bristle with all the elements of discontent and disunion. To us it means a perpetual war of tariffs with foreign States with whom now we have no conflicts.<sup>1</sup>

He showed the fallacy of adopting the German Zollverein as a model that applied to self-governing dominions scattered over the globe, which had no interest nearer at heart than the development of their own manufactures and would be as little disposed to accept " dumping " from England as from anywhere else. But true to his main strategic principle, he kept his argument steadfastly to the fact that colonial preference meant a tax on food.

<sup>1</sup> *The Times*, July 13.



He was at issue with Campbell-Bannerman on tactics in the House, insisting that the wise policy was not to make a formal attack from the Opposition Benches on Chamberlain's policy, since that would rally the Government ranks and give Protection a majority, but that the Unionist Free Fooders should make the running and complete the breach in the Government ranks. In this he prevailed for some time, but in July Campbell-Bannerman decided that a frontal attack must be made. Writing to Harcourt, he said :

*Campbell-Bannerman to Harcourt.*

6, GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W., July 4.—I do not think that anything rash will be done ; but of course we do not leave out of consideration the fact that Beach and James and *hoc genus omne* have objects in view which are not ours : in fact, as James avows, they want to prevent the Radicals from getting into office. I therefore take their concern for the Free Trade cause *cum grano*.

I told Loulou all about the situation yesterday and he said he would communicate with you. Since then I have seen Beach who seems to think he can induce Balfour to give, or get for us, the opportunity of a divisionless discussion. We shall see whether he can propose anything : he is not to be in London again till Wednesday. Until then we lie low. . . .

Harcourt was still hostile to a resolution which would rally wavering Government votes to Chamberlain's policy ; but if there was to be a resolution it must be strictly confined to a declaration against a tax on food. " It is absolutely clear," he wrote to Hicks-Beach, " that the taxation of food is the key to the whole position." If the food tax went, he wrote to Campbell-Bannerman, the whole Chamberlain policy crumbled to dust. " As to reciprocity and general Free Trade, if corn is not to be protected free import of everything else follows as of course, for if this main industry is not protected, it is impossible that other interests should be favoured. This followed as a necessary consequence from the repeal of the corn laws in 1846. I am therefore strongly in favour, if it be possible, to abstain from challenging a party division and rely upon raising the country upon taxation of food, which I am glad to think is being already satisfactorily commenced by the different organizations."

Harcourt's view that the wise strategy was to leave the disruption in the Unionist camp to develop was strengthened as the summer advanced and the break in the Government became imminent. The demonstrations of the Unionist Free Traders became bolder, and the question arose as to whether Chamberlain would surrender. "I was walking with Onslow this afternoon," Harcourt wrote to his son, "and he alluded to my letter (*The Times*, August 19). I said, 'All I fear is lest Joe should run away?' He replied, 'Oh, you need not be afraid of that.' I said, 'That is what I believe. He is not the man to run away from the guns.'" The crisis reached its culmination in September. Writing to Lewis Harcourt, after a brief visit to Homburg, Harcourt said:

*Harcourt to his son Lewis.*

OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE CLUB, *September 1.*—We had a bad passage over the North Sea in half a gale of wind, but I was able yesterday to attend the service at the Abbey [Lord Salisbury's funeral service]. I saw all the principal people of both sides. I then called on Ritchie in Downing Street, and as I rang the bell *Valentia* came up to me, and said, "Are you taking possession already?" I had a quarter of an hour with him [Ritchie], but it is evident the colleagues have little to say to him. He is determined to go *whatever happens*. What seems in the air is that Joe may put so much water in his wine as to induce the Duke [Devonshire] to stay for the present and that they will have some dilatory declaration to the effect that opinion is not now ripe for any action. But all this is speculation, no one knows what form Joe's action will take. . . . I dined with Spencer last night. He has got so far in the formation of his administration as to suggest that Campbell-Bannerman after his French speech might be Foreign Minister in the House of Lords. . . .

I met Moberly Bell in the train from Hook of Holland. He told me he had asked Austen [Chamberlain] whether he was as keen on fiscal reform as his father, to which Austen replied, "No, but then you see I am not so young." Ritchie told me the Hicks-Beach Party are doing very little. Indeed they are checkmated till Joe shows his hand. . . .

I am beginning to feel rather better for Homburg now that I have escaped from it. The Duke of Devonshire said to me, "The waters are all humbug, but I hope you learned to play bridge there."

All was confusion in the Unionist camp, and the only question was as to what form the crash would take. The

fall of the Government seemed so imminent that Harcourt's correspondence with Spencer, Campbell-Bannerman and others was largely concerned with what would succeed it. The publication of Mr. Balfour's *Economic Notes on Insular Free Trade* only darkened the situation, and when on September 18 the resignations of Chamberlain, Ritchie and Lord George Hamilton were announced the position was still further perplexed. Which party had won in the strange conflict? Chamberlain had gone; but two of the leading Free Traders had gone with him, and the place of the more important of them was taken by Chamberlain's son, who had succeeded Ritchie as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The mystery was deepened by the fact that the Duke of Devonshire, who was the most influential Free Trader in the Cabinet, remained in office. What did it all mean? Writing to Spencer, Harcourt said:

*Harcourt to Spencer.*

MALWOOD, September 20.— . . . I have a letter from Hicks-Beach this morning dated Wynyard, 19th. He says "no one there knows why the Duke and others stay while Ritchie and Hamilton go, but my host [Londonderry] has attached himself to the Duke with the understanding that when an election comes he will support F. Lambton as a free trader here. He *thinks* that the Duke has consented to remain on the understanding that the Sheffield speech [Mr. Balfour's] will postpone or water down the pamphlet feeling." Beach adds, "I much doubt if either Ritchie or Hamilton knew of Chamberlain's resignation before their own was accepted." A pretty piece of sharp practice!!

Beach himself is a "bruised reed." He evidently thinks he cannot depend on his section and that they are mostly "retaliators." And he refers me to his Article in the *Monthly Magazine* as showing that he himself is, as he says, by no means orthodox, and indeed he substantially says that he will not fight his own Party against the pamphlet feeling. It is all of a piece with his original error in introducing the 1s. Corn tax, and he is evidently intimidated, I dare say, in regard to his own seat.

I quite agree that the whole affair is a most dishonest intrigue with a scheme that Balfour shall undermine Free Trade inside whilst Chamberlain attacks it outside. The latter will, I believe, certainly fail; the former will, I believe, not succeed in the end, but will save the Government for the moment and do a vast deal of mischief in the meanwhile. . . .

I am sorry to say I suspect that though the Duke was all against taxing food he is not insensible to the advantages of *retaliation* in the interests of Barrow.

• In his speech at Sheffield on October 2, Mr. Balfour said that if he was asked, "Do you wish to reverse the fiscal tradition which has prevailed during the last two generations?" he would reply, "I do." He proposed to alter that tradition "by asking the people of this country to reverse, to annul, and delete altogether from their maxims of public conduct the doctrine that you must never put on taxation except for revenue purposes." Thereupon the Duke of Devonshire announced his resignation, declaring that he could not expound Mr. Balfour's views or those of the Government under these conditions. There was much stirring of muddy water in regard to the whole circumstances in which the Free Traders were manoeuvred out of the Cabinet, and Harcourt took the prevalent view that Mr. Balfour, while giving "any and every pledge which he found necessary to anybody to keep his sinking ship afloat," was only waiting for the success of J. C.'s progress to declare in favour of the 'grand plan,' and then all his dupes will have to follow in his train. The dishonesty of the whole business becomes more apparent every day."<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Chamberlain, free from office, started on his campaign to rally the country to the standard of Tariff Reform. The main burden of pursuing him and destroying him fell to Mr. Asquith, and his argumentative victory in that great encounter remains one of the most memorable incidents in modern politics. Campbell-Bannerman, writing to Harcourt (November 27), said: "There never was such a strange 'controversy.' Joe countered on all points: his blunders shown up, his errors exposed: but he never acknowledges, excuses or explains anything! He trusts to vulgar, ignorant applause of the 'strong man,' and to the selfish interests of particular trades. The Duke of D.'s speech is a huge help: but what a feeble lot are his followers—time-servers almost to a man." Harcourt's own

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Lord James, October 22.

campaigning days were now over ; but he fired a couple of farewell broadsides from the platform for the cause in which nearly sixty years before he had made his entry into political discussion at the Cambridge Union. His son had at last consented to stand for Parliament, and Sir William Mather had made way for him in Rossendale, the Lancashire seat, so long held by Hartington. There at the town of Rawtenstall, on October 31, Harcourt delivered a speech in which he made skilful play with the "two-card trick" of Mr. Balfour and Chamberlain, the one playing "retaliation," the other "food tax." He covered the whole field of the controversy in the spirit of one whose own part in it was ending. "I have seen in the course of my life," he said, "the state to which the country was reduced by protection. I have been spared to see the position to which it has been raised by free trade. These are the convictions which cannot, as you may suppose, pass away from my mind or pass away from my conscience." Replying to a letter of thanks from his son for giving him "the first start in my constituency," Harcourt said, "You know well that the greatest pleasure now left to me dwells in you and yours." He followed the contest in Rossendale with enthusiasm, gaily intimating to Loulou that he proposed to "crib" some of his good points for his own speeches. On December 11 he paid what proved to be his last visit to his constituency, receiving a deputation of iron and steel workers on "dumping" and speaking largely on that subject to a meeting at Tredegar. Writing to his sister on his return to Malwood, he uttered the first note of weariness of battle.

*Harcourt to his sister Emily.*

. . . I know you have heard of our expedition to West Mon. which was a success, though I expect some trouble from the iron people on "dumping." It was a great exertion and I realize that, though I got through, my time of hard work is up, and it is not for my advantage nor that of others that I should long continue what I am not really fit for. I am looking forward with hope to an early release from the wear and tear of political life, to enjoy what remains to me of life at home where I am always happy. And amongst other things, dear, I shall be able to be more with you. I live always in

thought of your brave and contented spirit in your enforced retirement, and wish I could do more to cheer it. . . .

"I am myself rather shaky and have not altogether recovered from the West Mon. expedition," he wrote Loulou a few days later. "I do not feel at all well." But his keenness in the struggle remained. "I think Joe's Commission [the Tariff Reform Commission] the most revolting thing I ever knew or dreamed of," he wrote. With Campbell-Bannerman he was in close communication on the subject of common action with the Free Trade Unionists, and his letters to Mr. Morley were full of lively comments on the great comedy in the Cabinet. "There has been nothing like the suppression of the resignation of J. C.," he said, "since the days of the Oxford-Bolingbroke Cabinet when they were hatching the Treaty of Utrecht and the fall of Marlborough." In sending a letter to be read by Mr. Morley at the unveiling of a statue of T. E. Ellis, the late Chief Whip, he laid stress on "that high spirit of public honour, free from chicane and underhand methods . . . which have been the great tradition of English politics," and in a private covering note to Mr. Morley he said, "I began my political life in 1852 with a pamphlet on the 'Morality of Public Men' and I may well end it with a similar disquisition. I entirely agree with you that nothing baser is to be found in our political records [than the betrayal of the Free Traders in the Cabinet]. I have used in the enclosed note the word *chicane* which sounds nasty as I intended it. But I looked it out in Johnson to see if it were permissible English and found the following appropriate authority from Prior :

'Unwilling then in arms to meet  
He strove to lengthen the campaign  
And save his forces by chicane.'

I will make you a present of this." He was eager in his inquiries about his friends *magnum opus*, the *Life of Gladstone*, now approaching publication. "Yes," wrote Mr. Morley (October 3), "the book is done—very long : some

of it interesting; a little of it indiscreet. A copy will reach you towards the end of the week, and may the Lord have mercy on your soul—and on mine.” “A great life of a great man,” was his verdict on the book to his sister, and writing to Spencer he said, “I sat up half the night reading it. I began as I always do with a novel at the end to work back from the catastrophe. He seems to have told the story as well as it could be told and with the least indiscretion which the circumstances admitted.” Writing to Mr. Morley himself on October 14, his seventy-sixth birthday, he said :

*Harcourt to Mr. Morley.*

The more I read of the biography [Gladstone] the more I marvel at its combined comprehensiveness and condensation. In that respect it is a literary masterpiece. It will live as a model of what a Life ought to be and is the best monument that could be erected to a great man. It brings before one the wonderful variety of the man in his gifts and his interests, his stupendous industry, and inexhaustible energy. There has never been anything surely *simile aut secundum*. All this you have portrayed to the life with the pencil of a master.

I should like in a future edition to have more of the Arcadian dialogues : *et cantare pares et respondere parati*.

He was present with Lady Harcourt at the royal banquet at Windsor on November 19. “It was young and lively,” he wrote to Lewis Harcourt, “a great contrast to the old Victorian days. . . .” He was busy meanwhile in writing a scathing attack on Chamberlain’s “impudent” Commission by which a jury of *ex parte* and interested men were to draw up a “scientific tariff.”

In the mellow avuncular mood which now pervaded his correspondence, he discussed the progress of the Tariff Reform struggle with extreme satisfaction. It had done two things which were dear to his heart. Chamberlain’s policy had broken the Unionist Party, and it had healed up the differences in the Liberal Party. Lord Rosebery, it was true, still declined to commit himself with the Party officially, but otherwise the ranks were closed up. Harcourt followed Mr. Asquith’s devastating pursuit of Chamber-

lain with delight, though he thought his speeches were too closely reasoned for the mob, but his chief admiration was reserved for C.-B. "I have written to tell him," he wrote to Loulou, "that in my opinion it [the speech at Maidstone] is quite the best that has been made on the controversy. Really on the platform he is A 1." The course of the by-elections, and the evidence that Mr. Balfour was "drawing off from Joe," confirmed him in the view that the campaign was going well. "The Chamberlain flurry has failed and all his bombast has fizzled out." "It is our policy," he said, "to keep Balfour on his legs for the present in order to fight Joe." For himself he knew that his fighting days were done, and he had no intention to "lag superfluous" on the stage where he had played so great a part. The return of Lewis Harcourt for Rossendale had filled his cup of happiness. "Next to his marriage and his delightful children," he wrote to his sister (February 14), "this is the great joy of my old age and I am preparing my *Nunc dimittis*. I have always had a strong feeling against people struggling on to maintain a position for which they are no longer fit." In this spirit he announced his farewell in the following letter to the Liberal and Labour Association of West Monmouth:

*To the Liberal and Labour Association of West Monmouth.*

22, GRAFTON STREET, February 23, 1904.—GENTLEMEN,—It is with much regret that, owing to uncertain health in the past year, I have not been able to appear more frequently on public occasions amongst my constituents, or to take a more active share in political affairs elsewhere. At my age I do not feel myself equal to the exertion to which I have been formerly accustomed during thirty-five years of parliamentary life.

I have much to be grateful for in the generous confidence and singular indulgence which have been extended to me by my friends and constituents in the nine years during which I have had the honour to serve in the Welsh battalions, which ever stand in the van of the party of progress.

I have, ever since I entered upon political life, given all my energies to public work. I regard the post of a representative of the people as a high trust and a great responsibility, not to be lightly undertaken or imperfectly discharged. Its duties become year by year more



weighty and more imperative; every one is called upon conscientiously to measure the power which he possesses honestly to fulfil them. I do not deceive myself in this matter, and though I am ready for the present to do what I can to discharge the duties of your representative, I recognize, as I ought, that I am no longer equal to do all that I desire and that I ought to do in the service of ~~the~~ great constituency in the future which lies before the country.

A General Election cannot be far distant. I have felt bound, not without pain, to come to the conclusion that I should not be justified in seeking at the next election to renew the lease of my parliamentary life, the obligations of which I could not discharge in a manner which would satisfy myself or those I had the honour to serve.

By your kindness, I have in a period of storm and stress done what in me lay to promote the principles and uphold the flag which gave me confidence. It is to me a supreme source of satisfaction to know that those principles will always find their highest representation and their unbroken stronghold in this great constituency.

The prospects of the Liberal cause were never brighter than they are to-day, when the reign of reaction is coming to an end, and the victory of the united party of progress is assured.

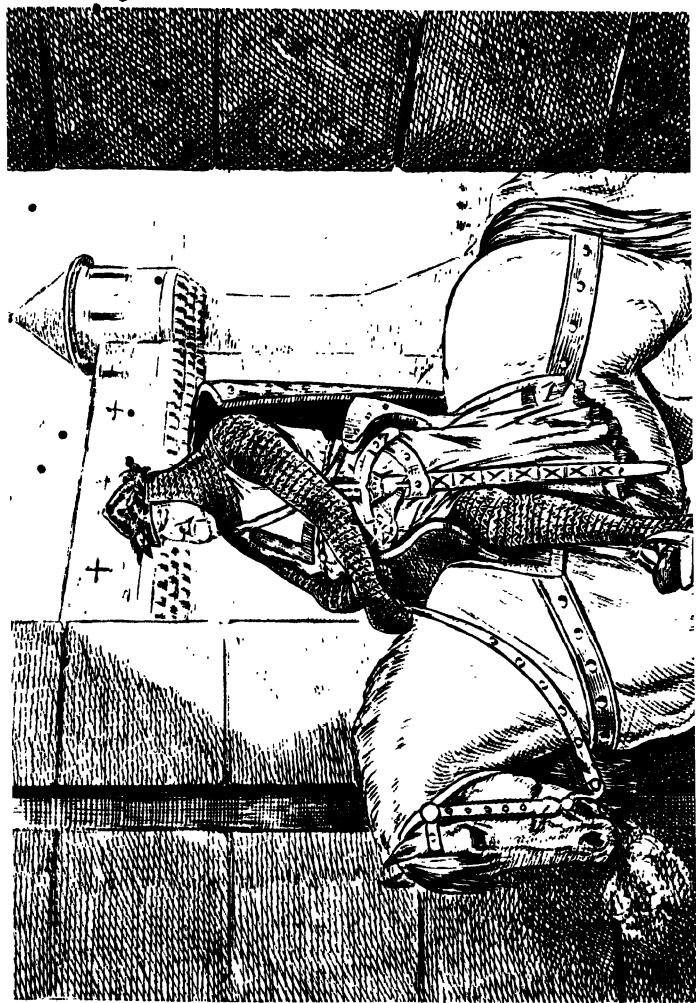
Your obedient and grateful servant,

W. V. HARCOURT.

The announcement evoked a universal chorus of praise, both public and private, for the retiring statesman—praise in which the note of affection, inspired by his own generous nature, was most conspicuous. Mr. Morley read the announcement on his way to Cambridge. He had known it was coming, "but that did not lessen the shock." "I strolled alone to-day in the gardens of your old college," he said, "thinking much of you and what your letter signifies to the House of Commons and to the public and to your friend." "To the House of Commons the loss is irreparable—that of the one survivor of the heroic age who kept alive in degenerate times the memory of greater days," wrote Mr. Asquith. "I have not always agreed, nor was I always a good follower," wrote Mr. Haldane (Lord Haldane) to him. "But there has never been a day when I did not realize how completely you have belonged to those—and there have not been many—whom history will reckon in the very first rank." Goschen, now in the House of Lords, with whom Harcourt had fought many a fierce battle, lamented that









"the last of the true Parliamentarians, not in respect of opinions, but as regards never-failing veneration for the traditions and dignity of the House of Commons," was saying farewell and leaving a "gap which no one will fill."

"You" and I (he added) have fought many a stiff fight, but I am sure that looking back upon them as we do now, we find that they have left nothing but personal regard behind, and have not effaced our early friendship when we first did politics together nearly forty years ago, when I was member for the City and you spoke in my support at the Cannon Street Hotel. I wonder whether you remember it."<sup>1</sup>

"Resignation is better than death, as it allows you to know the good things that are said of you," was Harcourt's comment to Mr. Morley on the pleasant tributes that poured in upon him. None of these tributes gave him more satisfaction than the gift of plate made to him on his resignation by the civil servants who had in years past acted as private secretaries to him "in affectionate remembrance of a service which was to all of us a privilege and a pleasure." Writing to Sir E. Ruggles-Brise in acknowledgment of the gift (a silver inkstand and candlestick), Harcourt said (May 31):

I shall dwell with gratitude on the memory of the happy days we spent together through all the "storm and stress" of public life, which was made to me possible and even enjoyable by the able and self-sacrificing support which I received from the colleagues to whom I owe whatever I have been able to do.

I have come to think that "retirement" is not only the wisest but the most agreeable phase of human existence. He is really happy to whom the pleasures of "Memory" are more dear than the ardour of hope. . . .

"I never knew till now what a considerable person I was supposed to be," he wrote to Lord Currie (March 15). "There is a nice French saying, 'Il faut toujours reconduire la vieillesse,' *reconduire* being, I fancy, 'seeing one to the door.' Altogether I feel very happy in not being called upon

<sup>1</sup> Lord Goschen writes that the relations between his father and Harcourt continued to be of great friendliness to the end, in spite of all their bitter battles in politics.

to do what I feel unequal to, and above all in having my boy Loulou returned to-day for a great Lancashire constituency without opposition. So I shall swear in young Hannibal at the table of the House of Commons to-morrow and hand him on my armour. He will not have to fight 'Jog' for that worthy is cremated already."

## CHAPTER XXX

### NUNEHAM

The Nuneham inheritance—An impoverished estate—A last appeal in the House for a halt in spending—The Cope portrait—A family party at Nuneham—A quiet exit—Tributes in Parliament—Funeral at Nuneham—Service at St. Margaret's—The Waldo Story statue at Westminster.

“**W**E had indeed a happy day yesterday,” wrote Harcourt to his sister on March 18, describing his introduction of Lewis Harcourt to the House of Commons on the preceding day. “The dearest hope of my life was fulfilled. The House was crowded on both sides, and both equally cheered the rising and the setting sun . . . I have always thought and said what a lucky mortal I am and how happy I ought to feel—as indeed I do.” A few days later an event occurred which suddenly changed his good fortune and with it the whole current of the brief remainder of his life. His nephew Aubrey Harcourt died at Monte Carlo. The victim of a tragic episode—he had been engaged to a daughter of Dean Liddell, who died within a few hours of their contemplated marriage—he had remained single, and the Nuneham estate having been disentailed, the property had been at his personal disposal. On his death it was found that he had re-entailed Nuneham to his uncle and his heirs, a condition of the inheritance being that the family name should be limited to Harcourt, a fact which necessitated the dropping of Harcourt’s original surname of Vernon altogether. Harcourt had been totally unaware of Aubrey’s intention, and had he been aware of it he could not have anticipated that it would affect him, for his nephew was young enough to have been his son.



The sudden and unexpected change in his career clouded the few months of life left to him. It brought him dignities he did not desire and cares which he would willingly have escaped. All his heart was in the home he had made at Malwood, and he had looked forward to ending his days there in cheerful enjoyment of its pleasures. Many happy memories centred in Nuneham, with its gracious lawns sloping to the river, its pleasant landscape and its distant vista of the towers of Oxford; but it had never been his home and it came to him too late in life ever to be his home. Moreover, though it brought dignity it did not bring the means of maintaining dignity. Writing to his sister after investigating the affairs of the estate, Harcourt said that, even with the money for the sale of Harcourt House, the old family mansion in Cavendish Square, there was no substantial income at all for indoor expenses at Nuneham or personal expenses in living there, or for the heavy repairs necessary to the dilapidated building. "There is no escape from this," he said, "and though I hope to make visits to Nuneham in picnic fashion for a few weeks in the summer, I cannot attempt regularly to inhabit it as my house, but must fall back, as I shall contentedly on my dear Malwood, which I love so well, as my residence, and take care that Nuneham does not suffer in condition for those who come after me and can afford to reside there." The more he probed the situation the worse it became. Writing to his sister again, he said:

*Harcourt to his Sister.*

22, GRAFTON ST., May 3, 1904.—Dearest Em, What is called a *succession* is full of trouble. Every day I find that there is more to pay and less to receive. It is now claimed that the whole roof of the house at Nuneham is in a state of decay, having been neglected for the last fifty years, and that it must be stripped and replaced. All the carpets are worn out, and the place wants repainting from top to bottom.

The pictures, it is said, all want cleaning and varnishing, and a man is to come down from the National Portrait Gallery to review them. I begin to long for the quietude of Malwood, instead of which all the silly people are worrying me to convert me into a pauper Earl.

I was born a younger son, and retain all the instincts and tastes of that happy estate, worth all the pomp of the unhappy landowner. It was a great piece of luck that poor Aubrey sold Harcourt House, and left me the money which it brought—which is in fact all I have with which to keep up Nuneham. . . .

He<sup>1</sup> threw himself into the heavy task that had fallen on him with his unflinching courage. He sat hour after hour over the big ledgers of the estate with Gale, the agent, terribly depressed by the despairing revelation of its impoverishment. His determination to get to the bottom of things and to learn the worst never faltered. His nephew Henry Rice, who saw him in the last days of his life, said, "I am struck with how much he understands and how he puts his finger at once on the weak spots in the farming." His absorption in the world of great affairs had not extinguished the lessons of his country training, but he could not look forward to time in which to redeem so forlorn a position as that with which he was faced. One day as he sat before the ledgers he looked up and said to his wife, "I feel like Horace Walpole when he became Lord Orford."<sup>1</sup> By the irony of events his difficulties were increased by the most illustrious achievement of his life, the death duties swallowing up much of the liquid resources that had come to him through Aubrey Harcourt's sale of Harcourt House. Repairs to the fabric of the building were necessary to keep it intact and much of the furniture was so worn that it had to be replaced. The carpet in the large drawing-room was in absolute rags and he bought another. Old Barston, the estate carpenter (so old that his constant assertion was that he "came under Earl Harcourt and hoped to die under Earl Harcourt"), said the old carpet dated from the Archbishop's time. Lady Waldegrave, when she married George Harcourt, wanted a new one, but her husband asked her to promise that a new carpet should not be danced on,

<sup>1</sup> "An estate and an Earldom at seventy-four.

Had I sought them or wished, 'twould add one fear more—  
That of making a countess when almost fourscore."

Horace Walpole, *Epitaphium Viri Auctoris*.

contemporary writer describing the scene,<sup>1</sup> "sat below the gangway with legs crossed, arms folded and eyes closed. Evidently he was too nervous to watch his father, and he relaxed his attitude only at the end of the speech. On hearing Mr. Chaplin's courtly compliments to Sir William, Mr. Harcourt's face beamed with pleasure. Sir William himself was affected and drew his handkerchief across his eyes when Mr. Chaplin deplored the approaching loss of another old link with the past and another great ornament of the old school. All members cheered the allusion, the Prime Minister's voice sounding distinctly." Harcourt spoke in the House once more, briefly, on July 15, on Education, but his warning to the nation to "Halt" was his true farewell to Parliament.

He had throughout his life resisted the requests to have his portrait painted. In his early days in London Watts had made a drawing of him which appears as the frontispiece to the first volume of this book, and there had been other "studies" of him; but even his old friend Millais had not prevailed on him to undergo the ordeal of formal sittings. In this last summer, however, he was induced to sit for a portrait subscribed for by the Liberal Party as a tribute to his lifelong services. Mr. A. S. Cope, R.A., was given the commission, and Harcourt sat for the portrait during July and August. The picture, which represents him in his Chancellor's robes, is a stately and worthy memorial of its subject. It hangs at Nuneham, and replicas of it are at the National Liberal Club and the Oxford and Cambridge Club in Pall Mall, the latter of which, from the beginning of his career in London to the end of his days was his favourite resort in Club-land. But it was at the National Liberal Club on July 27 that he uttered his last word in public. The occasion was the annual conversazione of the Club, held under the presidency of Lord Carrington (the Marquis of Lincolnshire), at which Campbell-Bannerman and Harcourt both spoke. The burden of Harcourt's speech was the abuse of the closure and the

<sup>1</sup> *British Weekly*, May 19, 1904.

part that abuse had in the loss of authority and respect from which the House of Commons was suffering. Nothing had been nearer his heart in public life than the maintenance of the dignity and traditions of the House of Commons, and it was appropriate that his last public word should have been on behalf of an institution for which he preserved a veneration which only one who was not merely a great statesman, but a great constitutional lawyer, a great historian and a great lover of liberty could possess.

By August, Nuneham had been got into habitable condition, and Harcourt and his wife, accompanied by Lewis Harcourt's children, went there for a brief stay before settling down at Malwood for the winter. The days flowed by in busy and pleasant occupation, drives to the river-side villages, walks with Lady Harcourt and the woodman over the estate to settle about cuttings and clearings, visits to the Duchess of Marlborough at Blenheim and his cousins, Lord and Lady Abingdon, at Wytham, the reception of callers to the new tenants at Nuneham and so on. They were days full of memories dear to the aged statesman—memories of the courtly Nuneham of the days of "Uncle G." and Lady Waldegrave, of the sober Nuneham of the days of his father. There was no premonition of the end. His letters were as full of high spirits as ever. He made fun to Mr. Morley of Mr. Balfour's "philosophic doubts at Cambridge. . . . He will find (he said) Isaac Newton and Francis Bacon persons more difficult to dispose of as wearers of worn-out phylacteries and musty formulas even than Richard Cobden." He was looking forward to the winter at his beloved Malwood and to freedom from the cares of Nuneham. "Land-owning is a more troublesome and less profitable business even than public affairs," he wrote to Mr. Morley. "It is the least restful of all occupations. . . . I have been laid up for some days with a sort of influenza but am now about again." There seemed no cause for anxiety. The grandchildren had just left Nuneham. The last picture that remains of them with their grandfather is of their rushing into the vestibule and seeing him going upstairs.

"Grandpapa, come back, come back," they cried, and he turned saying, "Well, I suppose I must do as I am told," and the children ran forward to him, clasping his knees. On the night of September 30 he sat with Lady Harcourt in the library. He seemed in his usual health, save for a slight cough. He wrote several letters, among them one to Mr. Morley, who was about to cross to America, in the course of which he said, "I do nothing but browse about old books and arrange old pictures and old letters and nurse the dregs of a sort of influenza brought about by a whiff of colder weather." He touched on many political matters with undiminished zest, and referring to George Wyndham, who "is becoming ridiculous," observed, "You must either be a Home Ruler or not a Home Ruler: there is no *tertium quid*." When the letters had gone, and he was preparing for bed, he said suddenly to Lady Harcourt, "Oh, I *must* write to Lady Sarah to ask after Spencer." He sat down at his table and wrote the following letter to Lady Sarah Spencer, the last thing he penned.

*Harcourt to Lady Sarah Spencer.*

NUNEHAM PARK, OXFORD, *September 30, 1904.*—DEAR LADY SARAH,—I cannot thank you sufficiently for so kindly writing me an account of dear Spencer. I had no idea that he had been so seriously ill. Remind him from me that I have always told him that *exercise* is the thing which destroys everybody.

I hope now that he will take great care not to overdo himself especially with County Councils.

We have spent two months in beautiful weather and enjoyed it much in spite of the troubles of a dilapidated house and a neglected estate. We find really that there is everything to do inside and out, and the last straw is the intelligence that the tower of the old Church at Stanton Harcourt is tumbling down and must be rebuilt.

We have been in such anxiety about our dear friend Mary Curzon, but I trust now she may recover.

Loulou and his family have been with us and we have greatly enjoyed his delicious children, who were left to us when he was in Scotland. He is now with Walter Burns at Myms and writes me this morning that they shot yesterday 386 brace of partridges for five guns! I hope in a few days you will write me just a line to say that Spencer is going on well.

Yours very sinly.,

(*Sd.*) W. HARCOURT.

The letter was too late for the post that night, and Harcourt left it on his blotting pad, and, retiring to rest, took with him a copy of the current *Nineteenth Century*, containing an article by Mr. Morley. He read the article in bed, and turned to a *jeu d'esprit* of Lady Currie's in the same periodical in which there was a pleasant mention of himself. He then fell asleep, leaving the review open at the page at which he had ceased reading. Next morning he was found dead in bed, having passed away in the night in the midst of slumber, quietly and painlessly as a child falls to sleep after the restless day.

The news, startling in its unexpectedness, created universal regret, and messages of sympathy poured in upon Lady Harcourt from all sorts and conditions of men and from all parts of the world. "I have lost," said King Edward in his message, "an old and valued friend in your distinguished husband." The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States cabled the sorrow of the judicial body at the loss of one whose name had been famous in America ever since the mighty argument of the Civil War. The Liberal leaders united in the expression of the irreparable loss the nation and the Party had sustained, and throughout the country the event aroused among the Liberal Party a sense of bereavement unequalled, except in the case of Gladstone, in living memory. The Press of all shades of opinion teemed with tributes to the famous statesman. Those who had fought him in life vied with those who had followed him in their recognition of the splendour of his career, the greatness of his gifts, the generosity of his heart, the wit and the wisdom with which for half a century he had irradiated the public life of the country.

Parliament was not in Session when Harcourt's death occurred; but statesmen of all parties paid honour to his memory in their speeches in the country and when Parliament reassembled the debate on the Address was preceded by formal tributes to the great "House of Commons man" whose place would know him no more. In his

eulogium on his old colleague and friend, Campbell-Bannerman said :

Sir William Harcourt was a devoted member of Parliament. He loved the House of Commons. He coveted nothing so much as to stand well with the House of Commons. He lived and died in its service, and in turn he commanded the admiration and respect and affection of nearly all its members. Our debates will be the poorer by the absence, not only of a skilful orator and a learned constitutional authority, but of a fine sample—the last, I fear, that lingered on it—of the grand old type of statesman.

Mr. Balfour's tribute to " one of the greatest parliamentary figures we have known in our experience " laid emphasis on the generosity of his nature. He said :

This is not the time to attempt any appreciation of the great parliamentary abilities of Sir William Harcourt ; but this I may say with the assurance that it will receive the sympathetic support of every man in every quarter of the House—he was a vigorous controversialist, but in the utmost height of party controversy, when feeling was running strongly, when he himself perhaps was taking, as was his wont, a leading place in the fighting line, he never allowed party differences to mar the perfection of personal friendship, and no dialectical display, no strength of party attack, made him forget for one moment that native and ineradicable kindliness which characterized the man. I am proud to say that he honoured me with his friendship for many years, and never was that friendship clouded even when our political differences were in their most acute stage. My experience is the experience of many men in this House ; and the result is that I believe he is as much regretted by gentlemen who sit on this side of the House, and who throughout their whole political lives have differed from him on matters of public policy, as he can be by those with whom he was politically associated.

In the family vault of the old church that stands on rising ground among the trees in Nuneham Park, the remains of Harcourt were interred on October 6. The obsequies were carried out with the utmost quietness and simplicity, few persons being present, except the members of the family and the servants and tenantry of the Nuneham and Stanton Harcourt estates. The public tribute to the deceased statesman was paid on the same day in London, where a memorial service, attended by the representatives of the King and other members of the royal family, by the Speaker of the

House of Commons and a great gathering of the leaders and rank and file of all political parties, was held at St. Margaret's, Westminster. In the old church at Nuneham Park a mural tablet was subsequently erected to Harcourt's memory.<sup>1</sup> On March 1, 1905, a replica of the Cope portrait of Harcourt was unveiled at the National Liberal Club by Earl Spencer in the presence of a great gathering of those who had been the political associates of the dead statesman in the past. A committee of both Houses of Parliament, presided over by Viscount St. Aldwyn (Hicks-Beach), was formed to raise a parliamentary memorial of one whose chief glory had been that he was "a great member of Parliament." A fund, subscribed by past and present members of both Houses, irrespective of party, was provided, and Waldo Story, the sculptor, was commissioned to execute a marble statue of Harcourt in his robes as Chancellor of the Exchequer. The statue stands on a pedestal in the members' lobby of the House of Commons. The ceremony of unveiling it on June 16, 1906, took place in the presence of the leaders of all parties in both Houses. St. Aldwyn handed over the statue on behalf of the committee, and Campbell-Bannerman, in unveiling it, pronounced a eulogy on Harcourt's lifelong devotion to the House of Commons. "I have heard him say again and again," he said, "that his great object was to stand well with the House of Commons, and it is here, therefore, that this honourable memorial to him should remain. Here it will stand as a landmark of the passing of the old school of parliamentary politicians. . . . But Sir William stands here in enduring marble for another purpose—as an incentive and pattern for all members who pass by for generations to come, showing them by his life how to do their duty, how to learn and enjoy the gratitude and good opinion of their countrymen, and showing them also, what is perhaps a rarer and in some respects a higher quality, how to win their way to the hearts and affections of the men with whom

<sup>1</sup> A photogravure reproduction of this tablet, which was executed by Mr. Emil Fuchs, appears as a tail-piece to this volume.



they work in public life." It was as a great House of Commons man that the Prime Minister (Mr. Balfour) also spoke of Harcourt. He exalted his great powers in debate, his unequalled knowledge of parliamentary procedure and his rare intellectual gifts. Those were great and rare qualifications, but they were possessed by others who lacked one thing which Harcourt possessed in a supereminent degree—the quality which could only be described as personality. "Whether Sir William spoke or was silent," he said, "no one could forget for a moment that he was present."

That potency remains. Among the spirits of the past that pervade the halls of Westminster none is more vital or abiding than that of William Vernon Harcourt.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### CONCLUSION

**M**Y task is done. I have set down the facts of a great career as faithfully as I could and as impartially as, I think, its subject would have wished, for he was an honest man who cultivated no illusions even about himself. I have extenuated nothing and slurred nothing. It would have been an injustice to Harcourt's memory to have done otherwise. He was large enough to have the whole truth told about him and to gain rather than to lose by the revelation of his weakness as well as his strength. Nothing remains except to attempt an estimate of his character and of his place in history. His life was so long, so various and so rich in material that it has been impossible to do more than to sail, as it were, from headland to headland, leaving the creeks and the inlets largely unexplored. There was about him that sense of abundance which is one of the chief characters of greatness. He was not a pool of still waters ; but a roaring torrent of a man, fed by inexhaustible springs of energy and overflowing its banks with careless profusion. All the forces of his great vitality flowed into the channels of the mind. He had been fond both of riding and shooting in early manhood, but the tendency to physical indolence, uncommon in Englishmen brought up in the country, increased upon him yearly. His theory was that all the vigour of a man should be concentrated on brain work and, with his love of humorous exaggeration, he was never tired of warning people like Spencer who lived much in the hunting field that most of his friends had "died from taking exercise." He would have endorsed the maxim of Plummer, the friend

of Sir Walter Scott, that a walk to the end of his garden and back once a day was enough exercise "for anyone but a fool or a fox-hunter." His passion was his garden, and his letters from Malwood glowed with the radiance of his flower-beds. He recited the names of the flowers with as much joy as Homer recited the names of the Grecian ships—and every year they seemed to be more wonderful flowers than they had ever been before. His happiest moments—if we may discriminate in a life that may be said to have overflowed with happiness—were those when he had a friend he loved with him to take round his flower borders, and to hear his familiar phrase of thanksgiving as he paused in his walk—"What could be more enjoyable?" "You know I am always more reasonable in the country than in London," was one of the inducements which he was accustomed to hold out to his friends to visit Malwood.

"His domestic life was very beautiful," says Wilfrid Scawen Blunt in *My Diaries*, "and at home he was adored." The early sorrows of his life had given almost a morbid tinge to the deep family affections which were always so marked a feature of his character, and his love of his home had no competing attractions. He had as little taste for gambling as he had for violent recreations. His arm-chair, his cigar, his book, his garden border were all the relaxations he asked, and though fond of society and one of the most brilliant talkers of his time, he hated "gadding about," and liked the talk to go on under his own roof-tree. He would sooner read a play than go to see one, and he was wholly indifferent to music, and far too candid to affect to love what he did not love. "I was able to enjoy it *moderately*," he wrote in his last summer of a visit to the opera *Traviata*. "Melba's singing is no doubt wonderful." He was not quite sure, but he was prepared to believe it.

With all his physical indolence, his health throughout his mature life was almost uninterruptedly good. He had a splendid capacity for making up lost or deferred sleep by going to bed at any hour, and when the Press was discussing the fact that another distinguished public man

was suffering from insomnia, he jocularly declared that he proposed to insert an announcement that "Sir William Harcourt is suffering from somnolence." Apart from his concern about his eyes, he was no friend to the doctors. Blue pill was his specific for all ailments, and it was only by the artifices of his family that he could be inveigled into seeing a doctor. Writing to his sister of one of these occasions, he said :

. . . Lily [Lady Harcourt] without my knowledge and against my will introduced the beautiful Dr. into my room this afternoon. He did not bring a pyx or viaticum, but only a stethoscope and a draught. Of course he passed me sound—as it was his business. He told me I had bronchial catarrh which I knew ; that my temperature was normal, and that I must not catch more cold. All these ideas had occurred to me. However, I made a full confession to him, and received plenary absolution. He was very pleasant, and went away knowing about me nearly half as much as I do myself—"said what he ort to ha' said and coom'd awaay." However, now I and my family will escape criminal prosecution for not employing the faculty. . . .

The strength of his constitution was proof against a consumption of tobacco that, like so much else about him, was Gargantuan. He only smoked cigars, but of these he consumed vast quantities, smoking at any time and almost anywhere. The fame of the reek he left behind him was a subject of frequent comment by his correspondents. "Charlie Tennant put me up in the most comfortable manner in the world," wrote Mr. Morley to him on one occasion, "and showed me a room in which you consumed a box of cigars in a week—a thing by no means incredible to me." He was not a connoisseur, and smoked anything that looked like a cigar, but he would not be fobbed off with a small one when a large one was available, for though he was a martinet where the public money was concerned he had no taste for small personal economies. When he was preparing one of his Budgets he was sent a gift of very large and very precious cigars, and his son and his official secretary (Sir Rees Davies), horrified at the pace at which he was consuming them—lighting one and throwing it in

the fire when the division bell summoned him into the House to vote—abstracted the box, and substituted one containing a smaller and cheaper variety. That they were cheaper would not have aroused his suspicion; that they were smaller revealed the infamous deceit practised upon him, and only the return of the large fat cigars appeased his wrath and enabled the wheels of Treasury life to revolve again.

The vast contours of his personality did not fit themselves easily into the small conventions of things. He needed a free air and ample room for his large movements. He bulged over enormously into the world of considered etiquette. He was himself, Harcourt, large, arrogant, joyous, ebullient as a gale from the West, and as hard to confine within the narrow limits of artificial decorums. He had in large matters a profound reverence for the dignity of things. "What an old Tory you are," wrote Mr. Balfour to him on one occasion when he was resisting some departure from customary practice. The constitution was as sacred to him as to Burke; the House of Commons was his ark of the covenant. Woe to the hand that defiled the august sanctuary of the national life. Woe to him who was faithless to its ancient sanctions. But he was as innocent of the small correctnesses of things as he was of "small vices." His reverence for the throne—the throne that is established on the basis of the "blessed Revolution of 1688"—was as absolute as his reverence for the House of Commons, and his approach to the Sovereign had the courtliness of one who inherited a thousand years of courtly ways. But I am told that his spirits were somewhat higher than was customary at Queen Victoria's table, his laughter more abundant, his jokes more free. His tastes and habits were not those of Victorian England, but of the earlier Georgian England, and his spacious manner could not quite accommodate itself to the prim and rigorous regimen of the court of his time. He was liable, as we have seen, to outrage the commandments of dress, as, when first at Balmoral as Minister in attendance, he went to Church with the Queen

in a grey frock-coat, of which he was rather proud, and subsequently received from Ponsonby the message "WE don't like grey on the Sabbath."

But though, in the sense of 1688, Harcourt was as royalist as any king, he was a constitutionalist before he was a royalist. The liberties of the people embodied in Parliament took precedence of the privileges of thrones, and on the rare occasions when there was a conflict between these interests, Harcourt was as stiff as a grenadier on the side of constitutional practice. No one was less of a flunkey, though no Minister was more careful about the sensibilities of royalty in domestic matters. When, after the assassination of Carnot, the French President, in 1894, there was some doubt about congratulating his successor on the ground of precedent, he poured out a torrent of indignation to Kimberley. "If there had been no precedent, one ought to have been made," he wrote. "If it had been a King, or a Kinglet, or a Grand Duke you would have rushed to congratulate on your bended knee. If we did not congratulate, I venture to say we are the only Government in Europe who did not. This is not the way in which Mazarin treated Cromwell." It was a little hard on Kimberley who had asked the Queen to approve of congratulations, and had received a reply in the affirmative, on condition that there was a precedent. Fortunately there was a precedent, the congratulations were offered, and Harcourt's wrath was placated. As a good European he was entirely without national prejudices or favouritisms, but from the fall of his pet aversion, Napoleon III, he was always especially cordial to France. The Journal records that after an unfortunate reference to Agincourt in Lord Rosebery's speech at Sheffield Baron D'Estournelles de Constant, the French chargé d'affaires, called to see Harcourt to complain. Harcourt, who was not often lacking in resource, explained that the English King at Agincourt was really a Frenchman, and that the battle was only an incident in a civil war in France. With this free rendering of history he soothed the indignant Minister.

## II

It is probable that he suffered much in the estimation of the vulgar by the atmosphere of jocularity in which he clothed himself, and by the genius for caricature which led him to drive his point home with some resounding extravagance. His gift of comic illustration and allusion, that power of bringing together incongruous ideas in a grotesque relation, was unequalled. He saw life from the humorous angle as steadily as Salisbury saw it from the tragic angle. He loved it with all its absurdities and failures, and because he did not expect too much from it, and saw it with the disillusioned rationalism of his beloved eighteenth century, he was able to laugh over it and with it. No one can read his letters and speeches or catch the echoes of his conversation without being sensible of a certain kinship with Dickens. Perhaps he caught the note of caricature from Dickens; but the likeness is deeper than any imitative quality. It pervades his whole point of view, his love of humanity, his enormous geniality, his delight in the common pleasures of living. It is unfortunate that there was no Boswell to record his sayings, for wit and wisdom flowed from his pen and his tongue alike in inexhaustible profusion. Like Falstaff, he was not only witty himself, but the cause of wit in others. He filled the air with the spirit of laughter, and men became gay merely at his presence. Take this little scene in the House of Commons on the night of July 10, 1894 :

Mr. Balfour wished to remind Sir W. Harcourt that he had not only to consider the interests of the Exchequer, but also the equities of the case as it affected the individual. He was told a story the other day of an eminent counsel, Mr. Scarlett——

Sir W. Harcourt : I told you. (Much laughter.)

Mr. Balfour : Oh ! you told me. (Laughter.) Then I will not repeat it. (Renewed laughter and cries of " Go on.")

Sir W. Harcourt : But it was about Lord Erskine. (Laughter.)

Mr. Balfour could not understand how the Chancellor of the Exchequer could have told it. (Laughter.) As he had been invited to tell the story he would do so. The eminent counsel being asked on his death-bed if he had not got off a great many scoundrels in his time, said : Unfortunately that was true, but at the same time

he had got a good many innocent persons condemned, so that on the average justice was done. (Much laughter.) No doubt the average claims of the Treasury were just, but in the case of a great many individuals great injustice was done, and he therefore supported the clause.<sup>1</sup>

It was a story of the true Harcourt vintage. He had an inexhaustible supply of such, culled from the legends of the law, the pages of history and his own abundant experience of life. Many of them have become classics which need not be repeated here. But his wit and humour did not depend upon an anecdotal faculty. They came fresh and sparkling from his own high spirits, and his habit of giving a humorous turn to grave matters. Lord James used to tell a story of a parson named Baker, of an excitable disposition, who annotated the margin of his sermons with such words as "Steady, Baker," and towards the close, "Go it, Baker." After the Home Rule split, when James and Chamberlain were sitting alongside Gladstone, Harcourt and Mr. Morley on the Front Opposition Bench, James delivered a violent philippic against his old colleagues. In the midst of it Harcourt murmured "Steady, Baker," and James was reduced to incoherency by his own laughter. This note of fun was unfailing. When the Althorp Library was sold to Mrs. Rylands, Harcourt wrote to Spencer: "The best of New Years to you and Lady Spencer. I only trust she will not become hopelessly literary in her tastes. It might spoil her if anything could. There is nothing really to promote reading like getting rid of your library. All that I know (such as it is) is due to my never having any books. When you have a good library you feel you have paid your tribute to letters and nothing more is required." . . . "Don't be too proud," he wrote to Spencer on another occasion. "I also have been chairman of a Parish meeting and elected all my men without a poll. They were all Tories of the deepest dye. If William Rufus had been alive he would have been at the head of the list." When Lewis Harcourt wrote to him that he had been kept awake all

<sup>1</sup> *Westminster Gazette*, July 10, 1894.



night through the nervous excitement caused by one of his father's speeches, he replied: "You are like the clerk at the table who, when Pitt had the wine, he had the headache. If I am to make the speeches and you have the insomnia I shall make no more speeches." When Hicks-Beach wrote to remonstrate with him for supporting a large grant to the Paris Exhibition in 1897 he said, "My principle has always been to be profuse in small things and parsimonious in large. A little oil lubricates these small businesses and gains you a credit for generosity at little cost." His wit was swift and illuminating. When some one remarked to him that Randolph Churchill contemplated forming a centre Party, "Quite so," he replied, "all centre—and no circumference." On another occasion a critic of Churchill finished with the exclamation, "Why, he isn't even an educated man." "No," responded Harcourt pleasantly, "if he were educated he would be spoiled." It was on the cruise of Gladstone with Tennyson on the *Pembroke Castle* that Harcourt, who with his son had been picked up at Ardnamurchan, chaffed Tennyson about "the early pipe of half-awakened *bards*." His gaiety and promptitude were equal to all occasions. One day in the eighties when he was Home Secretary, he attended a levee held by the Prince of Wales, and having forgotten to put on his sword, was stopped by one of the court officials and told that he could not pass without it. "Does Mr. Bright wear a sword when he comes to a levee?" asked Harcourt. "No, but Mr. Bright is a Quaker," replied the official. "So am I—for *to-day*," said Harcourt, and passed on.

From the Diary of Howard Overing Sturgis, of Queen's Acre, Windsor, with whom he sometimes stayed on his visits to the Castle, I am permitted to select some examples of Harcourt's table talk. Speaking of the folly of distrusting the prosperity of other nations, he said, "In politics as in private life, I am in favour of every one having everything he wants—it is the only way to be happy." Of the policy of isolation he remarked that "it is all very

well to say 'I am a quiet person and only ask to be left alone,' but you cannot say 'I am a snappy, quarrelsome person; but still wish to be left alone.' " Ridiculing the 'hunger to own every port of call in the world, he said, " If you want to post from London to York, it is not necessary to own all the inns on the road with the circumjacent farms attached to each." Of Rhodes (January 8, 1896) he said : " I think we had better give Rhodes a cocked hat and a pair of nankeen breeches and send him to St. Helena. I said to Rhodes when he was here, ' Mr. Rhodes, I have always been much impressed with what the Duchess of Buccleuch said to my wife, that it was so tiresome to have to correspond with thirteen housekeepers. Now, what you are trying to do, is to give us a fourteenth housekeeper to correspond with.' " He was rich in stories of Disraeli, and loved to quote a saying of his in reference to his wife—" She was a gay creature—she knew nothing of the past and cared nothing for the future ; she always said she did not know whether the Greeks or the Romans came first." The last time Harcourt stayed with Mr. Sturgis was on the occasion of the royal banquet at Windsor in November 1903. Referring to the departure of Harcourt and his wife after that visit, he says, " I never knew any people have train fever quite so badly. They were dressed and down before I had had my breakfast. At 10 their luggage and servants left (for the 11 o'clock train), and nothing would keep them here after 10.30. The dear old boy made me quite a touching little speech about my kindness."

His jests were never purposeless. They were the medium through which he conveyed his comment on affairs and actions. Thus, speaking of the Civil Service, of which he had an exalted opinion, he said that the country would be extremely well governed by the permanent officials (without political chiefs) for twelve or eighteen months and then the public would hang all the heads of the Civil Service to the nearest lamp-posts. " The value of the political heads of departments," he would add, " is to tell the permanent officials what the public will not stand." When Mr. Morley

talked of resigning in 1895, the Government being near its end, Harcourt said, "It is no use committing suicide when one is dying. It is only the addition of an unnecessary crime." Writing to Lord Rosebery about two candidates for the succession to Professor Seeley at Oxford, he dismissed one as a charlatan and the other as dull, adding, "It is very difficult to find a man who is not regarded by the learned as an impostor or by the unlearned as a bore." In all emergencies he took refuge in the reflection that "things are never quite so bad as they seem." "There is nothing so foolish," he wrote to Fowler, "as the temper of those who think that when it is bad weather it will never be fine again." "The next great revolution in America," he said, "will be the war for the emancipation of the American husband." When asked to go out in bad weather he said, "It is exactly that we may remain in them in bad weather that houses are built." "When well stay in the house, when ill go to bed," he said on another occasion. "The House of Commons likes the man who shows it's sport," he would say. Of himself he remarked, "I put my whole heart at one time into one thing."

He loathed dithyrambs, and loved common sense. His passion for the eighteenth century was not due merely to sympathy with its tastes, but to approval of its maxims and its enlightened, if sceptical, philosophy. He liked its sanity and its freedom from hysteria. "The nineteenth century in its close has been chiefly marked by its sensational degeneracy and the decay of common sense," he wrote to Mr. Henry Grenfell. "I see no prospect of any revival of masculine sobriety in the twentieth, but the reverse. I think we who have lived in the middle ages of the nineteenth have had the best of it, for which I am thankful." Writing to Mr. Morley apropos of an address the latter was to deliver on the nineteenth century, he said:

11, DOWNING STREET, *March* 18, 1893.—I wish I could supply you with *pabulum*. . . . I can think of nothing else than a general eulogy on the "tea kettle civilization" (as Carlyle called it) of the 19th century—which I abhor. Of the unification of mankind

(which I detest) by facility of communication. Of the removal of national prejudices and exclusiveness (which I cherish) by rapid transport of everybody and everything. Of the cheapness and plenty (mourned over by J. Lowther, H. Chaplin and the bimetalists) of which engineers are the principal authors. Of electrical science and its marvellous results which are only in their infancy. Of the freezing of the air into solids so that we may carry our atmosphere in our pockets.

I think on the whole the best text is cheapness due to the ingenuity of man. Say the civil engineers are the great economists of labour who countered the curse upon Adam (We earn our bread by the sweat of our brow).

His temper was high and undisciplined. It burst into flame at small provocation and scorched whatever came within its radius. It was often unjust, but it was never mean or malicious. It burnt itself out with its own fury, and usually vanished in laughter—not seldom at his own violence. He did not realize the smart his power of invective inflicted, nor how much his combative instinct, applied with the uncalculating joy of battle, and often in the wrong place, contributed to his failures in life. He smote and passed on, unconscious of the sore heads he left behind him. Whatever was in his mind came out with unconsidered frankness, and no man in public life ever had less taste or faculty for manœuvring for position or working for his personal ends. The consciousness of power, the sense that he belonged to the order of magnates, the imperious current of his own mind swept him along indifferent to the artifices and ingenuities by which the smaller practitioners of politics achieve position and success. He had no skill in manipulating the Press, or in organizing a *claque* to promote his interests.

There was a popular idea that he was a self-seeker. It has as little warrant from the records of his career as the other popular idea that he was lacking in seriousness. The parliamentary life of the latter half of the nineteenth century provides few examples, perhaps only one example, of equal devotion to the service of the State and of equal passion for its highest traditions. His egotism was that of words only. It was the expression of his abounding vitality. Behind this flamboyant play of mind, there was the ceaseless

to him from his father was missing he remarked plaintively, "It is not there, and yet I don't know of any one who could have taken and lost it except myself." Among the English poets he preferred Milton, Dryden and Cowper. The prose work which commanded his most unbounded admiration was Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, and he often referred to Miss Martineau's *Thirty Years' Peace*, and recommended it to his young friends. He was not a great reader of fiction, but delighted in the vehement statement, calculated to annoy his friends, that the greatest female novelist was "Guida." In literature as in other matters of taste, he harked back to an earlier time. When some one said to him that he would like to re-visit the world a century hence, Harcourt said, "I have quite an opposite wish—I would like to go back. I would like to have been a member of the Cabinet of Sir Robert Walpole." He disliked most modern manifestations, whether in life or literature, and when he was induced to read a poem of Mr. Kipling's he rebelled, and said he did not like "a vernacular 'Milton.'" He read widely in French and Italian, surprised his friends by his facility in taking up and pursuing quotations from Dante, and declared that his own literary style in early life was influenced by Pascal's *Lettres Provinciales*, which he thought supreme in controversial literature. For the classics he preserved a life-long devotion. "How untranslatable is Virgil," he wrote to Mr. Morley in one of his last letters. "I enjoy him more and more. The only sense shown by the medieval monks was in believing him to be a saint—the only one worthy of the Calendar." But he came to distrust the place given to classics in education, and writing to Mr. Morley in October 1897, he said: "We have just been establishing Bobby as an undergraduate at Cambridge, which is a portentous family event. I cannot reconcile myself to his devoting the next three years of his life to the study of Greek accents and the Cretic pause, *more Cantabrigio*, and I think I shall shunt him at the history Tripos, where I believe he will be able to learn something not absolutely useless in life. A good knowledge of Latin

and a moderate amount of Greek is, it seems to me, all that is to be got out of the classics, and he now reads Greek as easily as I do—which is saying very little.”

## III

In one of those letters to Mrs. Ponsonby in which in his early life he used to discuss with much frankness his own character and aims, Harcourt said that he had the ambition to leave “an English name.” I do not think it will be denied that that ambition has been achieved. Political fame is generally short-lived. It springs out of temporary issues and is forgotten as those issues recede into history. Here and there in the course of a generation one figure emerges who defies time and holds the imagination, sometimes by the qualities of the lawgiver of society, as in the case of Burke, sometimes by the energy and passion with which a great issue is met, as in the case of Fox, sometimes by the rare union of spiritual force and executive power as in the case of Gladstone, sometimes by the fascination of personality, bizarre as in the case of Disraeli, intense as in the case of Parnell. These men live on independent of the events in which they moved, and among these men it is safe to say that Harcourt takes his place. He takes it not in virtue of exceptional imaginative or original qualities. He gave little new impulse to ideas, and his eye did not range over far horizons. It may be said that he added nothing to the empire of political thought, though no man of his time did more, perhaps none so much, to clarify and elucidate that empire. The last claim he would have made on behalf of himself would have been that he was a seer. The visionary gleam was not for him, and he had small patience with those who took refuge from what seemed the realities of life in the anodynes of superstition or the quackeries of obscurantism. His mind was all daylight, and the only solution he would apply to the riddle of things was the common-sense reading of observed facts and the honest acceptance of the teaching of experience. His outlook was that of the historian and the constitutionalist,

and the roots of his thought were deep down in the soil of the past. When Mr. Balfour accused him of being "an old Tory," he spoke truly enough so far as his attitude to traditional ways and the "ancient lights" of governance was concerned. His mind was stored with the lore of centuries, and he had a profound reverence for the authority of history and for the wisdom of the fathers that begat us.

But this reverence for the past was not a sterilizing influence in his case any more than in the case of Gladstone. It informed and enriched his thought, but it did not put fetters upon his action. He saw the current of the national life coming down from precedent to precedent, a stately stream of ordered movement, widening and deepening as it flowed, and his conception of the task of statesmanship was to keep the channel clear for the larger unobstructed passage of the future. Though he was supposed to be an opportunist, he was the least empirical of men. The modern doctrine of activism would have seemed blasphemous to one who saw history as the continuous development of human society under the operation of ascertained and inexorable laws. If those laws were outraged the inevitable penalty followed, and it was the business of statesmanship to be the guardian of the commandments by the observance of which alone the national well-being could be secured.

Based upon this philosophy, his political creed throughout his life was singularly coherent and uniform. The opinions he expressed as an audacious young Peelite in the debates of the Cambridge Union in 1848 differed little from the opinions he expressed nearly sixty years later. They were the opinions not infrequently held by the younger sons of great families in youth, but generally discarded in maturity. Harcourt remained an incorrigible "younger son" to the end, and not a little of the intense resentment with which he was regarded by his class was due to the feeling, shared so strongly by his brother Edward, that he was a deserter from that class. "I have been a younger son for seventy-six years," he said plaintively when he had succeeded to Nuneham, "and I cannot be an elder son now." He be-

lieyed, none more so, in an aristocracy, but he did not believe in a privileged aristocracy. If the great families were to survive, they must survive on their merits, and not be propped up by external supports at the expense of the general interests of the community. No personal interest was allowed to override this elementary doctrine. His greatest legislative achievement struck a heavy blow at his own family, and, as it proved, at himself personally, but this consideration did not affect his action in regard to the removal of an anomaly at which his legal conscience and his social conscience alike revolted.

It has been said, and said with truth, that his outlook was temporal and secular. He himself delighted in proclaiming his Philistinism, by which he meant the plain interpretation and acceptance of the realities of life as he perceived them. “ It was the Philistines who made England,” he would say, and for those who, like Cromwell, sought to mould the politics of this world on the assumptions of the next he had small respect. “ I am of the earth, earthy,” he said, and his idealism in affairs was bounded by the horizon of the visible and the known. But within that horizon his mind worked under the governance of powerful moral ideas which were the heritage of generations of public service and of that disciplined childhood which he had passed under the searching and not uncritical eye of his father.

His opinions moved cautiously to the Left, and in his later years he represented the more Radical sentiment of the party ; but essentially he belonged to the great Whig tradition, and the tables of the law were, for him, written in the settlement after the Revolution of 1688. The golden age in English story was the first half of the eighteenth century, and in the enlightened common-sense of Walpole he found his ideal of statesmanship. There was a remarkable kinship between Harcourt and Walpole, but no trait in the earlier statesman appealed to Harcourt so powerfully as his devotion to the cause of peace. The corner-stone of Harcourt’s Liberal faith was the love of peace. Himself the most gladiatorial of men in the sphere of intellectual



combat, he loathed war as the denial of the sanity of human relationships. It offended him both by its unreason and its inhumanity. He had a poignant sensitiveness to suffering in any shape, and a childlike gift of happiness. The sense of an enormous enjoyment of life runs through his career like a refrain. He liked to feel that people were happy about him and that the world was filled with laughter and sunshine. Nothing angered him more than interference with the pleasures of the poor, and though his experience at the Home Office changed his attitude to the liquor question, the motive behind the change was still the motive of human happiness. He had been so deeply impressed by the part which drink played in causing crime and domestic misery that he was converted to the view that its control must pass directly to the community that suffered from it.

Upon this idyll of a happy world in which he loved to bask, war came as an outrage to the civilities of life and an insult to the intelligence. It wounded his feelings, but it wounded no less his intellect. It is not customary to think of Harcourt as a lawyer. His spacious personality and his flamboyant humanism do not conform to the legal habit; but no just estimate of him is possible which excludes the part which his legal training played in his statesmanship. He was the most eminent of living international lawyers before he had entered Parliament. The great argument he had waged throughout the Civil War in America had made his reputation on both sides of the Atlantic, and his appointment to the Whewell Professorship of International Law at Cambridge had put the seal upon that reputation. His attainments made any position in the judiciary accessible to him, and if he did not become Lord Chief Justice or Lord Chancellor it was only because he loved the House of Commons and the centre of the political battlefield too much to leave them. But the laborious years spent in pursuit of the law remained the background of his political thought and activities, just as his journalistic experience sharpened that faculty of handling diverse questions masterfully and popularly which made him so formidable

a combatant in any controversy in which he was engaged. The law was to him not a mean expedient for getting an advantage over an opponent: it was the covenant by which civilized life was sustained. It embodied the experience of history and the wisdom of the founders of our liberties. It had made the domestic life of peoples secure from the arbitrament of force, and the extension of its authority to the sphere of international relations was the supreme task left for the achievement of statesmanship. The impact of war upon a mind so governed by law stung him like an outrage to the deepest sanctities of life. As a practical statesman he did not rule out the thought of war or the need of preparation for war; but he hated the spirit of aggression and plunder which invited war, and he was the hot gospeller of the "Blue Water" doctrine which, in his presentation of it, limited our war aims to purely defensive purposes.

• The vulgar notion that patriotism consists in a desire to paint the map red and whip unwilling peoples into obedience to our rule never had a more powerful or more tireless assailant than Harcourt. He loved England with the affection of a son for his mother, but he loved it not for its possessions, but for itself, for the beauty of its countryside, the qualities of its people, the splendour of its intellectual achievements, the inspiration it had given to the world in the conceptions of social order and human liberty. The wider the influence of its spirit spread over the world the more he was content, and there was nothing in which he took greater pride than in the triumph of the Liberal doctrine of self-government which had made the overseas Dominions equal partners in a community of free nations inspired by the English spirit of liberty. But Jingoism and Imperialism were the negation of the English spirit. They aimed, not at widening the borders of freedom, but at imposing by force the will of a conquering race over subject peoples, and the fact that that conquering race was one whose chief contribution to the world was the idea of liberty added to the wrong the sense of disloyalty to

the soul of England. It is not my function here to inquire whether he was always right or sufficiently measured' in the advocacy of his views, though if we test his wisdom by such outstanding incidents as the case of Egypt or the case of the Boer War, it will hardly be denied that the comments of time and of events have been overwhelmingly on his side. But, leaving this question apart, his courage in taking an unpopular stand in great crises of our history, his indifference to the personal consequences to himself, and his passion for the imponderable things which he believed to be the things of price in the assets of a nation make his passage through life a memorable incident in our annals.

It was because he was a great Englishman that he was also a great citizen of the world. The virulent nationalism that cultivates the hatred of other nations and sees in their prosperity a menace to its own was abhorrent to a mind which by sentiment and training rejected so narrow a creed. He knew that the well-being of England was bound up with the well-being of Europe, and that the only reasonable and defensible nationalism was that which conceded a place in the sun to other nations. His nationalism was not the negation of internationalism, but its complement and fulfilment. He conceived of England as the moderator of the European assembly, not in virtue of any peculiar merit of her own, but by the good fortune which had made her an island power and had given her world interests rather than continental preoccupations. He wished to translate the geographical isolation into political detachment, not in terms of hostility but in terms of general friendship and goodwill. He was too sensible a man ever to cultivate so irrational and unstable a thing as national hate, and the experience of his life, in which he had seen international relations change with the facility with which partners change at a dance, had confirmed him in the sense of the folly of exclusive friendships or excluding animosities. During the long period in which Russia was the principal object of fear in the English mind he was persistent in his plea that there was room in the world for both of us and

that an accommodation with that Power was possible on easy and honourable terms. When the French alliance with Russia, and the French attitude in regard to Africa imperilled our relations with that country and brought us twice within half a dozen years to the brink of war, he exerted all his efforts to mitigate the cause of irritation between the two governments and came into strong collision with his Imperialist colleagues on the subject. Before his death he saw the pendulum swing violently towards France, and the beginning of the fateful association which culminated ten years later on the battlefields of France and Belgium. To the foolish observer he laid himself open to the banal charge of being "a friend of every country but his own," but in the retrospect of history the wisdom of his counsel is clear, and his life-long hostility to fettering alliances which brought us into the web of continental politics and committed us to designs we could not foresee or control is abundantly justified.

Bound up with his philosophy of peace and anti-militarism, was his economic and financial doctrine. He believed in Free Trade, not merely because it was vital to a great industrial community that lived by the exchange of its manufactures for the raw materials of other countries, but also because it was the key to that policy of benevolent neutrality which he held to be the true service which his country was called upon to fulfil in the troubled affairs of Europe.\* And his financial activities were directed to the same end. He was the last of the Chancellors of the Exchequer of the Gladstonian tradition. He was as stern as a martinet of Treasury control as Gladstone himself, and he exercised the power of the purse to limit the extravagances of policy and to check those tendencies to competitive armaments which, as he saw, were policy in the making.

The eighteen years that have passed since his death have seen the stage swept clean of all the traditions of peace and economy for which he fought so brave a rear-guard battle, but as we survey the wreck of Europe to-day we may legitimately ask ourselves whether we or the world have been

gainers by the abandonment of those traditions, and whether the greatest testimony to the sagacity of Harcourt is not to be found in the fruits of that abandonment. By the light of after events we see plainly that the struggle within the Liberal Party from 1892 onwards was not a personal struggle for supremacy of place, but a struggle of ideals, a struggle for the standard that should wave over the Liberal cause. To Harcourt the emblem on that standard was to be the old legend of "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform." It was not a popular legend at that time of feverish speculation and territorial expansion, and the legend offered by Lord Rosebery, the legend of "Liberal Imperialism," had a much more attractive sound. It was new, it was vague, it had the merit of seeming to claim a half share in the policy of the Opposition and to blur the lines of party strife. In the conflict as to who should bear the banner and write the signal on it Harcourt was overthrown. He was overthrown not by the party in the country nor by the party in the House of Commons. If the choice had been left to either such a triumph of ingratitude would have been impossible, for he was not only the most distinguished living statesman, with a record of disinterested service and with powers of mind, a comprehensiveness of vision and a habit of industry unparalleled among his contemporaries, but he was, both in the country and in the House, easily the most popular and the most representative of the Liberal leaders. He was overthrown by colleagues—some of whom, and those not the least responsible for his defeat, regretted it within a month—backed by a campaign in the Liberal newspapers, some of which also found speedy reason for repentance. It is commonly supposed that he was defeated because he had a difficult temper. He had a difficult temper. Whether, in its boisterous impulsiveness, it was a more difficult commodity to live with than that of "a veiled prophet" who uttered incantations and disappeared into his sanctuary is a matter for speculation. But the fact, of course, is, that Harcourt was defeated, not because of the difficulty of his temper, but because

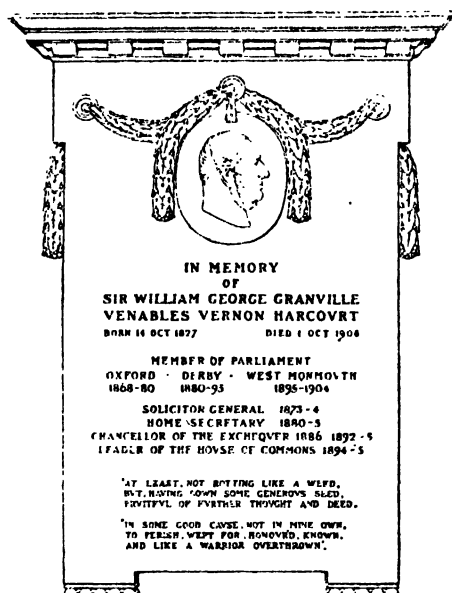
of the issue that was rending the party at its centre. The resignation of Gladstone and the withdrawal of that dominating influence—a withdrawal as we now know accelerated by the impatience of certain of his colleagues—brought the Liberal Party to the parting of the ways. Harcourt stood for the old traditions, and Lord Rosebery for a new gospel which was to bring Liberalism into true relation with the Imperial mission of which Chamberlain was about to become the chief propagandist. Lord Rosebery was chosen, and, though he speedily surrendered his task and remained an indeterminate and perplexing figure in public affairs for the next eight years, the decision marked the practical overthrow of the Gladstonian tradition. The party in the country became disintegrated under the stress of the Boer War and the dissensions of the party chiefs, and, though the raising of the Protectionist issue seemed temporarily to restore the ancient watchwords of the cause, Liberal Imperialism had triumphed, and had become a party to the balance of power and the policy of continental entanglements.

Harcourt had lost his last battle ; but he died, as he had lived, fighting gallantly for the creed that represented to him the soul of English Liberalism. Reckoned in the terms of conventional success, his career failed of full achievement. With his great gifts, the highest position in the State, whether in the realm of law or statesmanship, seemed his beyond challenge. He missed them both. But no office could add distinction to a career so many-sided or to a personality so vital and so commanding. He has left “ an English name ” that time will not obliterate and the record of a life of service to his country and to humanity that will be an enduring part of English story.









MEMORIAL TABLET TO SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT,  
IN THE OLD CHURCH, NUNEHAM PARK.

## Appendix I

### ACCOUNT OF A CONVERSATION WITH MR. CHAMBERLAIN AT MALWOOD ON AN IRISH EXECUTIVE AND ON IRISH REPRESENTATION AT WESTMINSTER

MALWOOD, LYNTHURST,  
*January 17, 1887.*

MY DEAR MORLEY,—

The visit of [Chamberlain] to Malwood has been a great success. I hope that you also have converted your host at Sandringham to Home Rule.

J. C. was in the most agreeable and agreeing humour, and is evidently genuinely and sincerely desirous of a reconciliation on the most reasonable terms. He seemed to me in all our conversations to be singularly little self-seeking or solicitous as to his own position in the affair. Nothing could be more explicit than his acceptance of our fundamental principle, viz., an Irish Legislature with an Executive dependent upon it, accompanied by specific limitations of its functions and proper securities for the central authority in Imperial affairs. He stated that he was very conscious that the acceptance of a Home Rule plan founded on these principles would expose him to much attack from his recent allies, and that he had said many things in the late campaign which could and would be brought up against him, but he added that he was quite prepared to face all that, and as you know he has plenty of pluck in such matters. I am quite satisfied that as far as he is concerned he has made up his mind to "put it through" on these lines.

He is as conscious as we are of the queer state of his coadjutor the Baronet [Trevelyan] and will pay no attention to his hesitancy. It is quite clear that the necessity of pulling the Liberal Party together has been borne in upon him on all sides.

I learn that he absolutely refused to have anything to do

with a Hartington-Salisbury combination with or without Randolph. The Goschen adhesion has had an admirable tonic effect as a counter-irritant, and will do much to heal the sores.

He saw Hartington on Saturday—not very willingly on J. C.'s part. I don't feel quite sure how much he told him. Their interview lasted only twenty minutes, but he assures me that he conveyed to H. the outlines not only of the land but of the Home Rule project. He said that H. expressed nothing of a positive character, but put no decided negative upon any part of it. On the whole he did not derive the impression that the Marquis was in a hostile humour or showed any annoyance at the conference, and that his sentiments were rather those of wariness than of antagonism. J. C. had learned that James, H. Brand and Caine were all strong for conference and accommodation. He had also heard from Hussey Vivian to the same effect. We went over the list of the principal dissentients, and did not find any known to be decisively against it except Albert Grey and Courtney and perhaps Craig Sellar. The first is an amiable goose, the second a crotcheteer, and the last a cantankerous Scotchman—so they may be written off, and we need take little account of them.

J. C. and I went over again all the points discussed in Grafton Street, and I found no flinching on his part on any of the questions which we deemed vital.

As to the land, he was very reasonable. He declared that he had no *amour propre* which induced him to insist on his own scheme, but was very urgent that if you and Herschell could not approve his plan you should suggest some other, as he attaches the highest importance to settling the land question somehow or other.

He admitted that I had hit a fatal blow in pointing out that if the rents were not collected the Imperial Exchequer might lose all the taxes which were paid into the Land Bank and would go to the landowners. He is therefore quite willing to withdraw that part of his proposals (which he says was only adopted at Herschell's instance) of making the *whole* taxation of Ireland a security for the rents. He would now propose that only the two million of local taxation should be paid in as a collateral security.

We also talked over the reduction of rent in case of a further permanent fall in prices, and he adopted a suggestion of mine that the business should be treated as a "rent commutation" on the same principle and plan as the tithe commutation, the

annual payment being based on an average produce rent say of three years' prices. I don't know how all this will work out when it comes to be critically examined, but I would strongly urge upon you and Herschell not to be too *cassant* in your criticisms of this part of the project, but to keep his land project simmering and not seem to put your foot down upon it adversely at once. It will be time enough to demonstrate its weaknesses later, and it is by no means desirable to come to issue upon this part of the business till we have progressed further with the rest.

As to the Home Rule chapter, things stand very much as they did. He definitely and distinctly accepts an Irish Legislature with the Canadian provincial powers specifically defined. He desires, whilst conceding authority over "civil rights and property," that there should be special provisions to prevent abuse of these powers against classes or sects—something after the fashion of the U.S. Constitution and the Dominion Act provisions in respect of education. He insists of course on the exclusion of the nomination of the judges (and says that this point seemed to give satisfaction to Hartington). I concur. As to the justices of the peace, he was willing to leave that over for discussion. On the head of police he adopted my view that the local authority (i.e. the County Board not the Irish Executive) should have the police under their control for enforcing what lay within the scope of their authority. He seemed more indifferent than I expected on the subject of an imperial police, which however I think quite necessary in order to enforce matters lying outside the provincial authority, and if necessary to restrain excesses and abuses of that authority, e.g. the enforcement of decisions by the Superior Court on questions of *ultra vires*.

The Superior Court, which is to keep the Irish authority within the limits of its powers, to be a special committee of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

He quite accepted the idea of regular Irish executive departments dependent upon the Irish Legislature, including an Irish Home Office, but with a disposition to some fixed term of official tenure after the American plan. I confess I don't see my way to this.

As to finance, the Irish Executive would have the administration of all the funds now expended in Ireland (subject of course to the question of lien for the Land Bank). No British establishment in Ireland except a Ld. Lt. or Ld. Governor

representing the Imperial authority. J. C. seemed to think this might be dispensed with, but that appeared to me impossible, as without some channel for information and action I do not see how the Imperial authority could be maintained in Ireland.

An Irish department in England to administer through the Ld. Lt. all Irish authority not delegated to the Provincial Government. Of Imperial establishments in Ireland there would then only remain the military and the imperial police; the latter, having in ordinary times and whilst the machine runs smoothly nothing to do, might be reduced to a very moderate number, and I suggested that a few thousand men for this purpose might be brigaded in three or four of the largest towns as Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Limerick, etc., and employed on garrison work.

On all the above points there seemed very little practical difficulty. There remained only the two difficult nuts to crack.

(1) The presence of Irish Members at Westminster. J. C. was disposed to admit them generally upon all non-Irish questions *in pari materia* with the subjects delegated to the Irish Parliament—the Speaker being the arbiter as to what comes within this category and when they should withdraw. I confess the more I think on this matter the less I can see my way to any practicable discrimination, and though, as you know, I am the person most adverse to their admission, if (as I now think) this point must be conceded, I should admit them without reservation.

(2) We discussed over and over again the great Ulster stumbling block. J. C. was very reasonable on this topic, and I am quite sure has no desire to seek in it a ground for breaking off, but of course he is conscious of the strength of feeling in his own section on this point; and I fully recognize that if we are to carry the matter through we must do something to appease the alarm—genuine even if unreasonable—as to the possible oppression of the Protestant minority. It is quite plain that this strong prejudice must be reckoned with and somehow or other met. Without this there could be no hope of pacifying the Hartingtonians or Scotchmen. I feel all the practical difficulties of the exclusion in whole or in part of Ulster from the Irish legislation, but I feel the force of what Chamberlain says—that if in the present state of opinion we hand them over to a Parnellite Government there will inevitably be a row *à la Randolph*. We must therefore strain all our mental resources to find out some *modus vivendi* on this subject. J. C. quite admits that the Ulster people cannot be allowed to say that they

will remain as they are whilst a system of self-government is given to the rest of Ireland, but he suggests that they should be told that whilst they are not to be subject to the Irish Government they must accept some form of local government of their own to perform the same function, whether it be called a Provincial Parliament or (as he thinks) they might accept and prefer some more modest machinery of Provincial Council.

This is all no doubt very difficult, but ought not to be insoluble, and Mr. P. would be a greater fool than I take him to be if he preferred to lose nine-tenths rather than compromise as to this fraction.

We discussed also the course to be taken in the event of agreement amongst ourselves. I thought the best way would be for Mr. G. to call the Party together with the co-operation of J. C. & Co. and state the general outlines of our agreement, we having drawn up for our own use in the future the more detailed form of the settlement. In this J. C. cordially concurred, and is evidently very anxious that the day for that meeting shall arrive at the earliest moment. Amen! say I.

We had some talk over the tenor of his speech which is to come off next Saturday at Hawick—an embarrassing incident. I found he contemplated speaking at some length of the land question at Hawick, reserving the Home Rule question for the next week at Birmingham. I told him this would never do, as if he confined himself to the land in his first speech he would accredit the rumours that Home Rule had been dropped, which would be fatal on our side to the conference. He admitted the truth of this, and agreed that if he touched one part he should touch the whole, and promised to convey the impression that the Home Rule question as well as the rest was in a fair way towards a settlement. I urged him on no part of the question to enter into details which might make alterations of the plan more difficult for him in the future. To this also he agreed. He observed that he did not wish by shading out the lines of the conference to put himself in the attitude of appearing to be laying claim in the future to the credit of the whole arrangement, which I thought creditable—but at the same time I was of opinion that, if he was to say anything on the subject at all, it had better be made conspicuous that he had accepted our principle of Home Rule. He assented, and observed very truly that he must prepare his friends for the fact some time or other, and might as well do so at once, as if he produced an opposite impression now it would be the worse for him in the

future. It is no doubt a difficult job for him, but he is ingenious enough, and will no doubt find his way out somehow or other.

I gather that Randolph is as furious against Goschen as we could desire, and that there is good sport in store for us. I am told that R. C. is only too anxious to rush into our arms. May God defend us from such a Coriolanus! He is far more profitable where he is as a thorn in the side of his former friends than he would be in our camp.

J. C. told him he would have nothing to say to his economy, which I am not surprised at, for Birmingham is the metropolis of reckless expenditure and our friend is and always will be a Jingo of the first water.

What a bore it is having to write at this length! when one could say it all in half an hour. However, with such great objects in view and such fine prospects of attaining them, 't is worth while taking a little trouble.

If with such cards dealt to us by a merciful Providence we can't win the game we are indeed first-class duffers.

J. C. and I are both agreed that we ought to inspire the Press with the impression that we have covered the whole Irish question, and that we have good hopes of a favourable conclusion to the conference. *This I think is of great importance at this moment*, and I trust you will use your influence *at once* in this sense in any journals to which you have access.

I am sure that J. C. will strike this note on his return to Birmingham.

Tell me your Sandringham experiences. I know they are the kindest and most graceful of hosts.

If you forgive this letter I shall no longer consider you a vindictive fellow.

Yours sincerely,  
(Sgd.) W. V. HARCOURT.

P.S.—I have just received Mr. G.'s letter in reply to mine of Saturday. As he tells me you have a copy of it I will say nothing on it to-day except that it gives quite as favourable a reception to our work as we could expect—and more so.

## Appendix II

### MEMO. BY SIR W. HARCOURT ON THE CHAPTER ON THE CABINET IN MR. MORLEY'S *LIFE OF WAL- POLE*, JULY 12, 1889

*(Cross Headings are inserted to explain the context.)*

#### *On the Committee of the Privy Council.*

I don't much like this. It seems to convey an approbation of the Government by Privy Council dear to the heart of David Urquhart. It would be entirely destructive of party government and parliamentary responsibility.

You may sometimes with advantage *square* the details of a measure as between the Government and the Opposition. This was done informally in the Parliament of 1868 in regard to the Amendments on the Irish Church and Land Bills in the House of Lords where Cairns under the direction of Disraeli came to a private settlement with Gladstone by which the Bills were passed; but anything which was recognized as making "the chief men of both parties jointly responsible for some great act of State" would entirely destroy party government, and would be a mighty weapon to restore the power of a House of Lords and possibly of the Crown who might force every question to this kind of solution.

#### *On the solidarity of the Cabinet and the powers of the Prime Minister.*

I am not sure that you don't overstate the doctrine of the solidarity of a Government in respect of its Ministers. A Cabinet Minister may be censured and impeached like Lord Melville without necessarily bringing about the destruction of the Government. It depends of course very much on the man and on his particular action which is called in question whether he involves the whole Cabinet or not.

As to the Prime Minister, I doubt if Mr. Gladstone would agree in the position of autocracy. I have often spoken to



him on this subject. He certainly is disposed to regard the heads of Departments like Secretaries of State as to a great degree autonomous in their own province—regarding the Prime Minister as only *primus inter pares*. I know that he entertains great doubts as to the right of a Prime Minister to require a Cabinet Minister to resign. I know that he tried it in one case for convenience of reconstruction; he was point blank refused, and acquiesced. [Carlingford.]

In any event, I think it must be done with the assent and in the name of the Sovereign. This was the case in the dismissal of Thurlow by Pitt and of Palmerston by John Russell.

The solidarity of the Cabinet and the accepted principle that they were bound to vote together and support the measures of the Government was certainly not established till long after the time of Walpole. During the frequent administrations in the first ten years of George III's reign there were repeated examples of members of the Government and even the Lord Chancellor opposing the measures of the Administration both by speech and vote. Notably Camden and Thurlow. I think in Lord North's administration which had the undivided support of the King there was less of this sort of thing, but I doubt if the principle can be said to have been established till the supremacy of Pitt. I imagine that his Reform Bill, against which his own colleagues (certainly Dundas) voted, was regarded as an open question.

Altogether I think you have laid down the rules as to the position of the Prime Minister somewhat too absolutely. In practice the thing depends very much upon the character of the man. What was true of the Cabinet of Peel and Palmerston would not be true of other Ministers.

You are mistaken in supposing that the title of "Premier" is not to be found before 1746. I remember very well discovering this word frequently used as applied to Lord Godolphin in the *Correspondence of Sarah Duchess of Marlborough*, in two vols. I happened to read it at Hughenden some fifteen years ago, and pointed it out to Disraeli. The word as a parliamentary word is very modern. I dislike it very much and would never use it myself. The old word in the time of North and I think of Pitt was "*the Minister*." I used to affect this phrase as applied to Disraeli, which pleased him. I would never say willingly even Prime Minister in the House of Commons.

There is one thing you should note. The communications of the Government with the Sovereign except on strictly depart-

mental matters pass through the Prime Minister. The Sovereign, however, when a Minister is in attendance can communicate with him upon general policy and does so where she has confidence in the particular Minister. It rests in her discretion and his loyalty what she chooses to ask and what he thinks fit to answer. She can therefore discuss with particular members of the Cabinet the policy of the Government and even canvass the views and action of the Prime Minister or of one of the other members of the Government. This is a very delicate matter, and no loyal minister would encourage it beyond a certain point—not that it is not a good deal done. Of course the flagrant example of this was the conduct of Lord Loughborough on the Catholic Question in 1801 when he practically advised the King against Pitt and upset him.

*Power of the Sovereign.*

There is one thing I think you ought to bring out more clearly and that is the right of the Sovereign to demand the opinion of the Cabinet as a court of appeal against the Prime Minister or any other minister in his general or departmental action. As a general rule the foreign dispatches are settled between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, and are submitted to the Queen, but if she dissents she has the practical right to demand the opinion of the Cabinet on the dispatch. This power was extensively used in the years 1859-61 by Albert acting through the Queen in German affairs, and I remember Sir G. Lewis telling me at the time when almost weekly Cabinets were called at the instance of the Queen that the dispatches were almost invariably modified.

This is really a very practical power in the hands of the Crown, especially where there is a strong Cabinet.

I think you know that the recognition of the South in the American Civil War was prevented by the majority of the Cabinet against the opinion of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

We had several instances in the 1880 Government where the Queen especially required that the Cabinet should be consulted as distinguished from the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary upon views stated by herself. Of course the decision of the Cabinet in such a case is final. I also take it that a Minister who is at issue with the Prime Minister has a right if he chooses to insist on the case being brought before the Cabinet. This was the great mistake R. Churchill made. If instead of

resigning into the hands of Salisbury he had insisted as Chancellor of the Exchequer that the question of the Estimates should be decided by the Cabinet he probably would have effected a compromise.

On a question of policy there can be no doubt that the most successful administrations are those where there is a strong Prime Minister and a subordinate Cabinet. Where the individual members of the Cabinet are too strong there are perpetual elements of discord and disunion. One man's opinion is as good as another's—and better. This is why Coalition Governments like that of Rockingham with Fox and Shelburne failed. So also latterly the Government of Lord Liverpool with Canning, Peel and Wellington. Notably the Aberdeen Government. I could if it were not indiscreet give more recent examples. Though in theory *primus inter pares* the Prime Minister should really be *inter stellas luna minores*. This was eminently the case with Walpole, Pitt and Peel. Even Pitt you will remember was beaten in his own Cabinet on the fortifications by the Duke of Richmond.

I have made these observations as they occur to me, not with a view to your publication—as some of them are perhaps of too esoteric a character for print—especially the parts which refer to the Queen's appeals to the Cabinet.

## Appendix III

### CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MR. HUCKS-GIBBS (LORD ALDENHAM) AND SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT ON BIMETALLISM

*Harcourt to H. Hucks-Gibbs.*

TREASURY CHAMBERS, WHITEHALL, S.W., *October 21, 1892.*—  
DEAR H. GIBBS,—Mr. Gladstone has forwarded to me your bimetallic letter. You need not alarm yourself. The new “old-fashioned” Chancellor of the Exchequer has not and does not intend to alter Goschen’s instructions. This, however, you must regard as confidential, as it would not be proper to divulge the instructions before the meeting of the Conference.

Depend upon it they shall have “ample room and verge enough.” I should think their deliberations would be much like those of the Council of Trent. The science of currency resembles that of metaphysics or dogmatic theology; it lends itself to unlimited controversy. “When one man talks about what he does not understand to another man who does not understand what he says—that is currency.”

I am glad you think me “old world” in my ideas. So I am—a good deal more Conservative and orthodox than you inflationists.”

There have always been and always will be people who believe cheapness and low prices the greatest of human evils and that the proper cure for them is to debase the currency. If you will look at Spencer Walpole’s *History of England* (vol. ii. p. 33) you will see how in 1822 sundry remedies were proposed to raise prices. Of course in periods of depression of trade and commercial distress panaceas of this kind are always listened to with a certain amount of ignorant favour.

Houldsworth of course in the interest of Levantine cotton wishes to choke off the Indian cotton industry, and Chaplin desires to get rid of Indian wheat. The objects and arguments are the old Protectionist stock-in-trade. “Give us high prices,

and you shall have high wages." But the truth is that wages were lowest when prices were highest.

I have great sympathy with the depressed industries both of cotton and agriculture, but I do not think they are to be met by tampering with the currency.

England has attained and kept the position of being the great money market of the world, and all nations come to London to settle their accounts, because it is the only country the stability of whose currency can be relied upon. I remember talking to Blaine on the silver question. He said to me, "For us the question of exchange and foreign trade is a trifle; we depend upon our own inland commerce." That is not the case here. We are the money-changers of the world, and a great part of our wealth and prosperity depends on this. If our financial and commercial system were an erroneous one, depend upon it we should have felt it long ago in diminished trade and draining wealth; whereas it is notorious that never has there been so vast an advance in the volume of trade and the accumulated wealth as is evidenced by the great increase in the yield of the income tax and of the death duties in the last twenty years.

Experience of this character cannot be shaken by abstruse currency speculations. This question will have to be solved by men who have knowledge of its practical bearings.

I see you object to a predominant representation of *London* monied interest at the Conference. But after all it is to a great degree a "money market" question, and London is the "money market" of the world. This is eminently a question of "exchange," and London is the grand exchange. It was for this reason that I was very pleased to secure the assistance of one of the Rothschilds, for their knowledge of all the European markets and their name will carry great weight and be a guarantee that their views are not solely insular or local like those of the cotton manufacturers who, important as they are (I think Goschen said on his Budget their income was equal to that of the medical profession), are affected by the special circumstances of their trade with India. What we have to look to is the trade of the Empire as a whole, and the great bankers and exchange merchants have a wider knowledge and experience in its interests and requirements than the representatives of any particular branch. The position of England as the great *creditor* nation of the world is also within the special purview of the bankers.

I have tried to make the English delegation as fairly representative as I could. (1) The Government (who after all are

the parties primarily responsible for the national currency) will be represented by the Deputy Master of the Mint and the head of the Department of National Debt, both able and experienced men with a full knowledge of this particular subject ; (2) the money market of London, which as I have said is the money market of the world. This interest, which has far the largest stake in the question of currency and exchange, will be represented by Currie who will stand for the national banking and credit interest, and Rothschild who will represent more especially the foreign relations of the English money market ; (3) the Lancashire cotton interest and its special Indian connections, which will be well defended by Houldsworth.

As you are probably aware, India will have its separate delegation, and fight its own battle on its own ground.

All this, of course is for your *private* eye. I wish I could cure you of your youthful and rash radicalism in monetary questions, but "boys will be boys."

Yours sincerely,

W. V. HARCOURT.

\* P.S.—As it is demonstrable that in recent years the incomes of the upper and middle class, except those of landowners, have increased, and the wages of the working class have also increased, the fact that most of the commodities they purchase cost less, the savings of all classes are greater, as is shown by the probate duty and the Savings Bank deposits. These savings constitute the capital out of which progressive enterprise and increased employment of labour is supplied. The cheapness of commodities is therefore not only a special benefit to the consumer, but is a main source of the accumulation of capital. If it is argued that incomes and wages would be higher and therefore the savings would be greater when prices are high, the answer is that experience has shown this is not in fact the case. They have both ruled higher in the periods of low than of high prices. So great has been the plethora of capital from the increased accumulation of savings in this country, that it has been found very difficult to find sufficient employment for it whenever the Argentine and other markets abound.

*H. Hucks-Gibbs to Harcourt.*

ALDENHAM HOUSE, NR. ELSTREE, HERTS, November 14, 1892.—  
MY DEAR HARCOURT,—Thank you for your letter of the 3rd. I think you must mean 1821 and not 1820, when Baring did

propose the adoption of bimetallic standard money; a very different matter from the "cheap money" agitation of Attwood and his like. They were "soft money" men. Their paper was not the money of half the world as Baring's silver was. Baring was quite right, and only spoke the words of all students of political economy, in pointing out the evils of a contracted currency. Ricardo opposed him, not by saying that there could be no such evils, but that there had been no such contraction; and this he endeavoured to prove by the truly insular argument that there was plenty of gold in England!! Wonder he did not go on to assert that though England had taken to use all that plenty of gold, that did not argue any increase in the demand for and use of that metal, and that therefore the money measure of the world could not have become contracted, nor gold itself dearer! He—and you—would have the sooner perceived his error. But neither he, nor possibly Baring, had made any careful study of the natural working of the law of dual legal tender. Why should they, unless they had perhaps read Sismondi's theoretical exposition of it? They counted with it as one of the ordinary phenomena of nature, and with its effects as part of their daily life. They had never lived in a world where either the sun did not rise, or where there was no par of exchange between the money metals of the world. 'You follow Montague and Huskisson, you say. Yes, you try to follow in their wake, but you leave your compass behind, and are drifting on to a lee-shore. You adopt their chart, or think you do, and do not perceive that you are navigating the ship in a different ocean from theirs. You shall hear some more about them before I have done with you! You follow them, but it is a corrupt following of those "apostles." I wonder what those worthies would have said to their follower, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, who should ignore the commonplace of political economy, that it is of the essence of civilized commerce that the buyer and seller should have a common medium of exchange, if possible; or where it was not possible, then as near thereto as possible.

But you, I dare say, only ignore it because you have, necessarily, had no experience in commerce, and think it sufficient to furbish the rusty old weapons used in ancient warfare, and rush to battle with the war-cry, "No inflation"!! I would suggest "No Popery"! It will be quite as relevant, and more effective. Of course you cannot have time to study the matter by the light of events which have taken place since you learned

political economy ; but at least you can't tax me with a desire for high prices, or for inflation of the currency ; for my evidence was, that I cared not what the ratio was, so that we had one ; that the effect of a ratio of  $15\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 would be slight and imperceptible, so far as the increase of the measure of value was concerned in raising prices (2 and 2, do you know, never make more than 4. Gold joined to silver are not likely to make a greater mass than gold not joined to silver) ; and that a ratio of 20 to 1 might not improbably diminish the amount of the measure and lower prices.

Oh Lord, Lord ! as Pepys would say ; to think of a man of your intelligence echoing that newspaper rubbish about the prosperity of England resting upon its being a place where you could always get gold ! But there ! it doesn't signify ! It's only a letter to me ! You know as well as I do that England was the " metropolis of the commerce of the world " in 1660 (as Monk said) when we had a silver standard ; that it remained so in 1666 and onward when we had a bimetallic standard (barring that for a time Amsterdam, which had a silver standard, was the banking centre) ; and that we retained our supremacy even when we had an inconvertible paper currency, when you could never get gold. Can you not find a cause for that supremacy a little more flattering to your countrymen ? If not, perhaps you will try to find a reason why a world which used silver by preference should flock for their exchange operations to a country where they could always get a metal which they did not want, and rarely used.

The money market ! There is your error ! You take the money market to comprise the whole of the commerce of England, and therefore listen only to bankers, home and foreign—of whom Currie and Alfred Rothschild are good examples—who think (some of them) that they and their class have an interest in the maintenance of the present system. It would be not unnatural if the Rothschilds and the banking interest generally should look upon the money market and the dealing in bills of exchange and in foreign securities as the be-all and end-all of commerce. It is their own particular " leather." They don't in reality so look upon it, of course ; but their tendency is to do so, and to affect the " simple and unscientific mortals," among whom you are pleased to class yourself, with that view. I am on the other side. I look upon those things as the handmaids, the very useful handmaids, of commerce. Let foreign commerce cease out of the land, and bills of exchange



dwindle to nothing, and the whole edifice of banking begins to crumble.

As it is, the enthusiastic believers in a self-contained banking system, and in the absolute necessity of gold, only gold, have you for their champion, whom they egg on to shout "No Protection"! and a long procession of bankers follow after you, each with his tongue in his cheek, with a longer procession of officials and idlers "living on their means" all crying aloud, "Down with Protection!" their real cry, *sotto voce*, and addressed to your particular ear, being "Protect our gold! Proh Jupiter! Protect our gold!"

You say you love cheapness; but their cry is for "dear gold!" . . . Cheap food for the people, and dear gold for them to buy it with! "Gold," they say, "is the wage-stuff of the country. The farmer pays his men with gold or its representative. . . . See that he gets as little as possible of it for the produce of his land! You will be surprised to see how happy and contented the poor will be when the farmer makes no profit, the landlord no rent, and—the labourer no wages!" I illustrate my meaning by the example of the greatest of all manufacturing interests, but it is true of all other manufactures as well as that of which land is the foundation.

However—you have chosen your side. You have elected to march with the drones, and against the working bees. I take the other side, and—I shall win. It may interest you to observe in this connection, that it is the industrious class, the farmer, the merchant and the manufacturer, who are the great employers of labour, and that the banker and the annuitant do but little for the working class. The labourers in all trades have been of late inclined to quarrel with their bread and butter, and with their manufacturing masters for giving them so little of it; but they are now beginning to inquire why the masters have so little of it to give; and I expect that before long they will let you know the reason why.

The volume of trade has increased, you say, in these last years, and you give shipping as an instance! The volume is one thing; but the profit is quite another. The old horse in a mill must go round and round, though what he grinds is not wheat but tares. But you prove profits, (1) by income-tax returns; and (2) by death duties. Now I should like to know how much of that income tax is in Schedule D, and whether that Schedule has prospered in proportion to the increase of population; and, if it has, how much of it is due to legitimate

commerce, and how much to stock-exchange operation. The low average rate of discount, always a concomitant of depressed trade, points to the latter.

But the death duties! Oh! Oh! Were all those benefactors of the Exchequer whose estates have lately paid heavy probate duty born and buried since 1875? Their accumulated wealth is perhaps, as you intimate, the consequence of the system under which they lived. But when did they live? And under what system? They lived before the calamitous rupture between the two monetary halves of the world; and their wealth is composed of the profits of the first four or five decades of their lives, minus the losses of the time in which you think their prosperity has been so manifest.

Now then, a word or two about Montague and Huskisson. You follow them, you say, *hand passibus æquis*. I don't think you would find any difficulty in keeping step with either of them, if you would walk in the same path. But you accompany them part of the way, and then go astray after the devices of able but less wise successors of theirs.

I also am a follower of both those statesmen, if I may venture so to describe myself; but I follow them straight through in their monetary policy.

You, I think, fix your eyes on Montague's overthrow of Lowndes, and on his discomfiture of the paper-money craze, and of the false reasoning of its supporters. There I am with you heartily. But would it surprise you to learn that your illustrious predecessor, with the assistance of John Locke, perfected the law of the dual legal tender passed in 1666, by establishing what was then I suppose held to be the true ratio between gold and silver, viz., 15½ to 1. Giffen, who has not fully understood either Locke or his times—*ita censeo*—vaunts him as the great assertor of the single standard. It is quite true that Locke said that there could be but one standard (and that that one ought to be silver). But not only is there no such thing *in rerum natura* as a single standard, in our modern sense of the word (for the gold standard of one nation necessarily affects and modifies the silver standard of another, and vice versa), but, as the history of those times shows, neither Locke nor any one of his contemporaries had a conception of a monetary system in which both metals did not play their parts as full money, and he himself modelled his recommendations on the existing facts, and treated silver and gold as full money in England. He was right all the same in his conception of the oneness of the standard. Men could not

think their monetary thoughts in two metals. They thought their bargains out in silver ; but the mints were none the less free and open to both metals, and legal-tender gold was rated at  $15\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 to standard silver. Men reckoned their debts in the silver pound, but paid them, if they pleased, in gold.

I am quite content with such "monometallism" as that. Let gold be the standard, by all means, but rate silver to it ! Now is your chance, not only to follow Montague, but to emulate him—to settle a difficult question, and obtain much well-deserved *kudos*. You will never settle it by sitting with your hands folded, and letting other people tinker Indian finance.

We come now to Huskisson. He also said, in 1816, that there could be but one standard ; and treated it as an open question whether it should be gold or silver. Whether he used the word standard in the sense in which Locke used it, or whether he changed his mind subsequently, is of no importance ; nor is it of the least moment to decide whether under the plan proposed by him there were in fact two standards or only one. The name of the thing is utterly unimportant. The substance is what we have to consider ; and the fact remains that in 1826 Huskisson proposed a plan by which silver certificates to be issued by the mint for £50 were to be legal tender. The plan was rejected by the Duke of Wellington, "because" according to S. Walpole—"he had the good sense to see that it would virtually lead to the establishment of two different standards, and that it was therefore inadmissible."

Lead to two standards ! It established two standards, if it is at all true that I and those who think with me desire to do so.—Huskisson's dispatch, dated February 8, 1826 (a copy of which you shall have in a convenient form), is an exposition and recommendation of bimetallism pure and simple—that is to say, of the law of dual legal tender—differing only from that now proposed in that it imposes a minimum of legal tender and provides against our being burdened with masses of silver in our pockets by providing convertible paper instead. There is your great exemplar ! Follow him !

Now, as to the Duke of Wellington. I do not know whether Walpole read Huskisson's dispatch. The Duke did ; as he was bound to do. I have read his dispatches, and I cannot find that he said anything about "two standards." He did apprehend "two prices in the market, a gold price and a silver price," but that is not precisely the same thing. See his letters to Peel, February 18, 1826, and to Canning on the day following.

He disapproved, however, on the ground which I have mentioned, and in the erroneous belief that the certificates would go to a discount in correspondence with a supposed market price; which of course they would not.

This was in 1826; but in 1839, when he had thirteen years' more experience, he said that he had always considered it advisable "to revert to the ancient practice of this country, making gold as well as silver legal tender for large sums." See the paper which I will enclose with Huskisson's. He was then indeed under the erroneous belief that in France Government could vary the ratio; and he desired the same proviso here. It is true that that provision was in Gaudin's draft of the French law of 1803, but its inconvenience was recognized, and it was struck out. The Duke was also mistaken as to the effect of the *agio*, which solely affected export of the metal, and had practically no effect on the home market.

I daresay you don't know that there is at this moment an *agio* on bar gold in London—about 2*d.* an ounce!

I suppose Huskisson's paper and Soetbeer's remarkable paper will come before the "Ductores Dubitantium of the new Council of Trent"—the "silver Trent." Soetbeer was, you know, the champion monometallist of Germany, and a most able man. I will send you what he says in a letter to a neighbour of mine about the Conference. The defect in his plan is that it gives no par of exchange. It "does something for silver," but for that I care comparatively little.

Believe me always,

Sincerely yours,

HENRY H. GIBBS.

*Harcourt to Mr. Hicks-Gibbs.*

TREASURY CHAMBERS, WHITEHALL, November 19, 1892.—DEAR GIBBS,—You are inspired with all the zeal which is characteristic of perverts.

I don't find it necessary myself to go back to such ancient history as that of Montague and Locke or even Huskisson and Peel! I am content with the instruction I have derived from a very conclusive document of more recent date—the report of the British Commissioners at the Monetary Conference of Paris in 1878, which bears the honoured signatures of George J. Goschen and Henry H. Gibbs. I find that these eminent authorities made to assembled Europe and America the following statement:

"We ourselves considered that the impossibilities of establishing a bimetallic system by common agreement for all the world were so obvious that it was scarcely worth while to argue on the matter, while we declined as also unnecessary any discussion of the general merits of a single or a double standard."

I am content with that verdict of common sense and common experience, and I have recommended this report to my friends who are going to Brussels as the best chart and compass by which they can steer their course.

If it was "impossible to establish a bimetallic system by common agreement" in 1878, it is impossible now, and it will not be done.

You tell me quite truly that "I have had no experience in commerce." That cannot be said of the two respectable gentlemen whom I have quoted, and you know as well as I do that it is the opinion of 999 out of every 1,000 men experienced in commerce in this country.

Nothing shows me more how the bacillus of the bimetallic craze has eaten out the fibre from economic intelligence than your tirade against the bankers, whom you class amongst the drones, a sentiment worthy of a French anarchist, who regards capitalists as the enemies of the human race and especially of the labouring class. It seems a strange aberration in the mouth of a Conservative merchant of the City of London.

You say the "banker does little for the working class." What is the fund from which labour is fed? I suppose capital. What is the function of the banker except to act as a reservoir and a conduit pipe for that capital and the main instrument of that still larger fund derived from the superstructure of credit bred on that capital. The banker lends the money for labour, and is the depository of its produce. You are like the unwise member in the old fable who despised the functions of the belly, and declared that the life of the body was only in the hand. You might as well say that the gasometer and the gas mains had little to do with illumination.

Though I am not a commercial man, I profess after sixty-five years to have some experience of life. I am in the habit of judging of systems, whether of currency or other affairs, by their results. After the experience of fifty years the great growth of the wealth and prosperity of this country satisfy me that the policy of free trade is a sound one. If it had been unsound our industries and commerce would have waned and

not waxed as they have done. I find that in comparison with other nations we have attracted and are attracting to ourselves year by year more and more of the trade of the world, whilst our industries increase and the general level of our wages (subject to periodical fluctuation) steadily rises. It is true that the division of profits has changed; the capitalist gets a smaller and the wage-earning class gets a larger share. The improved condition of the latter is evidenced by the enormous increase of his consumption of cheaper articles—articles which have become cheaper by improved methods of production, greater facility of transport, wider areas of competition. He not only gets higher wages, but those wages buy in proportion a far larger amount of goods.

All this satisfies me that we are on the right road.

I apply the same test to our monetary system. If it was unsound we should find some traces of the evil in its results over a long period of years. I pointed out to you the signal growth of the national income and its accumulated wealth in the last twenty years as a proof that we had suffered no injury such as you suppose, but the reverse, from the monetary changes which have occurred abroad in that period.

Your answer shows that you have not made yourself acquainted with the elementary facts of the wealth of nations as shown in this country in the last twenty years. I told you that the wealth of the country had vastly grown as evidenced by the income tax and the probate duty. You reply, "I should like to know how much of that income tax is in Schedule D and whether that schedule has prospered in proportion to the increase of population?" You ought not to have required to ask such a question. The conclusive answer to it is to be found in that A.B.C. of economic facts, the *Statistical Abstract*. Where should the growth of the income tax be shown except in Schedule D? You do not, I suppose, look for it in Schedule A under the ownership of land, where the values have notoriously fallen, or in Schedule B which relates to the occupation of land. As you do not seem to be cognizant with the figures I will give you them from the last number of the *Statistical Abstract*, p. 31:

#### INCOME-TAX SCHEDULE D ENGLAND.

*Annual value assessed.*

1877	.	.	.	.	.	£221,000,000
1891	.	.	.	.	.	£306,000,000

That is an increase of about 50 per cent. in the fifteen years. You ask has this Schedule increased in proportion to the population? The answer is notorious. The increase of population in the same period has been from—

1877	.	.	.	.	.	.	33,500,000
1892	.	.	.	.	.	.	38,000,000

an increase of less than one-sixth or about 15 per cent. Let me give you another fact of much importance in answer to the deplorable pessimism of you bimetallist gentlemen. In the first quinquennial period 1877-1881 the assessments were almost stationary; in the last quinquennium, when our ruin ought to be more complete by the protracted deprivation of bimetallism, the figures are—

*Schedule D.*

1887	.	.	.	.	.	.	£248,000,000
1891	.	.	.	.	.	.	£306,000,000

a growth of more than 20 per cent. in five years, and the later the year the greater the growth.

There is another fact of importance. Schedule A (*Stat. Abst.* p. 30) so far as it regards land has fallen in the last fifteen years, 1877-1891, to the amount of 11 millions, but houses under the same Schedule have increased from £90,000,000 to £123,000,000. There is perhaps no better test of the well-doing of a community than the growth in make and value of houses. It shows that the mass of the people have more means and spend it in the best way. Here the growth is nearly 40 per cent. against a growth of population of 15 per cent.

So much for the annual income of the nation and its languishing state pining for bimetallism. Now let me give you the same elementary source of the state of its accumulated wealth as shown by the probate duty (*Stat. Abst.* p. 34) :

PROBATE DUTY, ENGLAND.

1883	.	.	.	.	.	.	£109,000,000
1891	.	.	.	.	.	.	£144,000,000

again a growth of nearly 35 per cent. Oh, but, you say, this wealth was accumulated in the fine old times before the calamitous rupture out of the profits of the earlier periods. How comes it then, most sagacious logician, that the ratio of progression in the value is far greater in the later than the earlier periods of this series. The probate duty speaks for the upper and the

middle class. The growth of the Savings Bank deposits tells the same story as to the growing wealth of the wage-earning class as the great augmentation of consumption testifies to their improved income (*Stat. Abst.* p. 191):

## P.O. SAVINGS BANK, ENGLAND.

*Receipts.*

1877	.	.	.	.	.	£ 9,000,000
1891	.	.	.	.	.	£21,000,000

an increase of more than 100 per cent.

*Capital.*

1877	.	.	.	.	.	£27,000,000
1891	.	.	.	.	.	£66,000,000

much more than double.

If you want to test whether business transactions in the mercantile world have flourished or declined look at the figures of the Clearing House (*Stat. Abst.* p. 212):

1874	.	.	.	.	.	5,937 millions
1891	.	.	.	.	.	6,848 millions

Finally, my dear Gibbs, my prescription for your bimetallic depression of spirits is to study the *Statistical Abstract* prepared by the admirable Giffen. You will find in it consolation of the most solid description.

These considerations save me from the despair with which the groans of the bimetallics would oppress me. If you would begin to make yourself acquainted with the real state of the facts in relation to the growth and progress of the national wealth you would be confident in your spirit and not lie awake at night haunted by the spectre of the "calamitous rupture."

You think if you could only make everything dearer every one would be better off. You believe that if the price of wheat was doubled the farm labourer would get better wages. That is contrary to the experience of facts. When at the beginning of the century the price of wheat was 100s. a quarter or three times its present value the wages of the labourer in Hants were not one-half their present amount. High prices do not create high wages. Wages have hardly ever been higher than in the present state of low prices and their purchasing power is doubled. The working classes know this very well.

All the world is occupied in a perpetual effort to produce everything at a cheaper and still cheaper rate. The ingenuity of



mankind is exhausted in finding cheaper substitutes for labour, greater facilities of transport ; increased production stimulated competition, and when that is accomplished you think you can step in and reverse all their efforts by a change in the currency laws in order to raise prices !

Why don't you abolish the railroads, break the machines, blow up the Suez Canal ? You will equally accomplish your object without an international agreement. Prices will rise, wages will be raised in consequence, and every one will be happy !

Yours sincerely,

W. V. HARCOURT.

## Appendix IV

### MEMORANDUM BY SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT OF MARCH 2, 1894, ON THE RELATIONS OF THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND THE FOREIGN SECRETARY IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

. . . The attempt to conduct the Liberal Party from headquarters in the House of Lords has not been attempted for upwards of half a century with a single exception the experience of which was not encouraging. . . .

The House of Commons makes and unmakes a Government, and has a right to expect that its chief representative should be directly within its sphere of influence and personally accountable to it. These general considerations, applicable at all times, probably were never more necessary to be considered than in the present conjuncture.

No moment less favourable could have been selected for asserting the hegemony of the Upper House in a Liberal Administration. I should have felt compelled as a member of the House of Commons to have insisted more absolutely on this view of the case, were it not that from accidental circumstances my own personal position might seem to be involved. Whatever, therefore, may be the view taken of the situation, I am prepared to take any position which may assist the interests of the Liberal Party in the position of unexampled difficulty in which they find themselves by the loss of their great Chief.

I must, however, express a very distinct opinion that no man could attempt to lead the Liberal Party in the House of Commons with the smallest chance of success who was not armed, and known to be armed, with the authority essential to such a position.

Among the particulars of such authority, the following seem to be obvious :—

I. He must have power and discretion upon emergencies arising in the House of Commons to act upon his own judgment

upon the spot, as the occasion appears to require, and it must not be understood that he has to await directions to be obtained *aliunde*.

II. In relation to foreign affairs he must stand in the same position in respect of communication and consultation beforehand upon all important decisions before they are adopted as that which belongs to the Prime Minister. It is plain that upon no other condition could he be responsible for the defence of foreign policy in the House of Commons.

III. He should be consulted on appointments, as the opinion of the House of Commons in such matters greatly affects the stability of an administration.

IV. It should be understood that upon his request a Cabinet should be summoned to consider questions which he regards as material.

V. The practice of direct communication by the Leader of the House of Commons with the Queen upon questions of general policy is already recognized.

## Appendix V

### SUMMARY OF BUDGET PROPOSALS SHOWING FINAL BALANCE SHEET FOR 1894-5

*Extract from speech delivered by Sir William Harcourt in the  
House of Commons on April 16, 1894.*

I had to meet a deficit of £4,502,000. I have reduced this deficit by clearing the revenue of the year from the charges arising out of recently contracted debts by £2,123,000 leaving a sum of £2,379,000 to be met by additional taxation. The additional taxation is thus distributed:—Estimated additional yield of the new Death Duties during the present year will be £1,000,000, the additional Beer and Spirit Duty will produce £1,340,000, and the additional 1d. on Income Tax will yield £1,780,000, making a total additional revenue of £4,120,000. From these there has to be deducted, under the proposed abatements and allowances under Schedule A, a total of £1,450,000, giving a net additional revenue of £2,670,000. Setting this against the deficit of £2,379,000, we have a surplus of £291,000 for the present year.

Let me now attempt briefly to review as a whole the plan I have endeavoured to lay before the Committee. I have been invited to introduce a partisan Budget. That is not my view of the duty of a Finance Minister in this country. The responsibility for the finances of an Empire like this is no light matter. The Minister is the trustee for every class and for every interest in the community. He has not the right to employ those powers to serve sectional or party purposes. Where it is his happy fortune to relieve the burdens of the people, he is bound to distribute that relief with an impartial hand. Where it is his harder fate—as it is mine—to call upon the community for great sacrifices to support great national interests, it is his business to distribute the increased burden upon just principles, so that its weight may be endured by those who are best able to bear it. The guiding principle of taxation is that the liability should be

imposed where it shall be least heavily felt. In that consists the whole science of equitable finance. Let me invite a candid examination by the Committee of the proposals of the Government, regarded from this point of view. We find ourselves called upon to raise £2,379,000 by extra taxation for the defence of the Empire. How is it to be raised, and how is the burden to be distributed? I will first regard the operation of our scheme upon the wage-earning class who, it will be admitted, have the smallest margin beyond that which is required for the necessities of life. No one will dispute that it is upon them the lightest part of the burden should weigh. I would point out that in our proposal, upon men earning less than £160 a year, or £3 a week, no additional taxation will be imposed except possibly 1d. upon a bottle of spirits. That is not a large contribution to ask of them for the national defence, and it is, at all events, a voluntary subscription. Upon a glass of spirits, or pot of beer, as I have pointed out, there will be no increase in price; it might be 1½d. on a nine-gallon cask of beer. That is the extent of the burden imposed upon the means of the great mass of the people who earn their livelihood by the sweat of their brow. Ascending now to the next stratum—namely, the classes with incomes between £160 and £500 a year—I have already shown under the head of the Income Tax that the additional 1d. that we impose will not involve any increased burden upon them, but that, on the contrary, the augmentation of the allowance will place the numerous class between £160 and £500 a year—a most deserving class, whose margin is very narrow—in a more favourable position than they now occupy with the Income Tax at 7d. Incomes above £500 a year will be called upon to pay an additional 1d. for national defence. The man with £1,000 will contribute £4 3s. 4d. more than he does now; the man of £5,000 a year will contribute a little more than £20; the man of £10,000 a year £40; and the man of £50,000 something above £200. So much for the Income Tax.

As to Death Duties. Properties below £1,000 will, as I have already shown, pay less than they now do. Properties of the capital value of £25,000 in free personalty will pay upon no higher rate than they do at present—namely, 4 per cent. Realty and settled property will be placed upon an equal footing with unsettled personalty. They will lose, it is true, the advantage of the exemptions they now enjoy. That is a just and equitable provision which must have been made quite apart from the exigencies of increased taxation. As regards realty, it will

have the compensation that the disadvantage which it suffers under Schedule A will be removed. That is an immediate and present gain to a distressed interest. The additional weight on realty from the estate duty belongs to the future. No increased taxation from this source will occur during the present year. It will accrue gradually and at intervals of time, and will always be proportionate to the actual value of the estate, after deduction of mortgages and charges. You may take it generally that the period of a Death Duty extends over a generation of thirty years over which the burden is distributed. I venture to claim for this plan that it is a fair plan, conceived with a due regard to the interests of all and to the capacity of each class of the community to bear the burden. You have to consider not only the objections to this plan and the taxes we propose, but you have to tell us what you are prepared to put in their place if you reject this plan. It is not a pleasant task for any Government to be called upon in any shape to add to the burdens of the people. No form of taxation can be otherwise than distasteful and unpopular to those on whom it must fall. You have voted vast Estimates from a conviction that the expenditure was necessary and politic. If you have performed your duty in that respect you will not fail in the obligation to meet that charge. The House of Commons will never, I am persuaded, shrink from or refuse any effort which is necessary to sustain the honour and provide for the safety of the country.

FINAL BALANCE SHEET, 1894<sup>45</sup> (as proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer).

Revenue. 1894-5.	£	Expenditure. 1894-5.	£
Customs . . . . .	19,850,000	I. Consolidated Fund Services.	
Add, Increased Spirits Duties . . . . .	160,000	National Debt Services . . . . .	25,000,000
Excise . . . . .	25,060,000	Naval Defence Fund . . . . .	—
Add, Increased Beer and Spirit Duties . . . . .	1,180,000	Other Consolidated Fund Services . . . . .	1,653,000
Stamps . . . . .	13,080,000	TOTAL CONSOLIDATED FUND SERVICES . . . . .	<u>£26,653,000</u>
Add, Increase from Estate Duty . . . . .	1,000,000	II. Supply Services.	
Land Tax . . . . .	14,080,000	Army (including Ordnance Factories) . . . . .	18,081,000
House Duty . . . . .	1,440,000	Deduct, Interest on Imperial Defence Loan . . . . .	70,000
Property and Income Tax . . . . .	15,200,000	Navy . . . . .	17,366,000
Add, Proceeds from additional penny in £1 . . . . .	1,780,000	Deduct, Interest on Naval Defence Loan . . . . .	75,000
Deduct, Loss from Reliefs under Schedule A and to small Income-Tax Payers . . . . .	16,980,000	Civil Services . . . . .	18,688,000
	15,530,000	Customs and Inland Revenue . . . . .	1,677,000
EXCHEQUER RECEIPTS FROM TAXES . . . . .	<u>£78,330,000</u>	Post Office . . . . .	7,038,000
Post Office . . . . .	10,570,000	Telegraph Service . . . . .	2,277,000
Telegraph Service . . . . .	2,620,000	Packet Service . . . . .	749,000
Crown Lands . . . . .	420,000	TOTAL SUPPLY SERVICES . . . . .	<u>£67,231,000</u>
Interest on Purchase Money of Suez Canal Shares, Sardinian Loan, etc. . . . .	136,000	Total Expenditure . . . . .	93,884,000
Add, Suez Canal Share Dividends . . . . .	260,000	Balance for Contingencies . . . . .	291,000
Miscellaneous . . . . .	1,550,000		
Add, Payment from Naval Defence Account . . . . .	289,000		
	<u>1,839,000</u>		
EXCHEQUER RECEIPTS FROM NON-TAX REVENUE . . . . .	<u>15,845,000</u>		
Total Revenue . . . . .	<u>£94,175,000</u>		
			<u>£94,175,000</u>

## Appendix VI

### MEMORANDUM ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF LORD ROSEBERY'S RESIGNATION WRITTEN BY SIR WILLIAM HARCOURT AT A DATE LATER THAN 1896.

The question has sometimes been asked me why I should not co-operate with Lord Rosebery in the interest of the Liberal Party. As long as that question had not become urgent in a practical form I preferred to be silent upon the subject for fear of doing injury to the cause which I am desirous to serve, but, as an answer to that question seems to have now become inevitable, it is necessary to state the facts which have made that co-operation impossible, however much I might desire it. How little I am responsible for the disunion which has come about will appear from the memorandum which I drew up at the time of Lord Rosebery's resignation of the lead of the Party in 1896.

I took care to verify its accuracy by showing it to my colleagues who were acquainted with the facts.

The contrast between Lord Rosebery's letter of July 15 and that of August 12 seems inexplicable, as nothing whatever had occurred in the interval to account for it.

The object of the letter to Lord Spencer of August 12 was obviously to obtain the concurrence and support of his colleagues to compel the retirement of Sir W. Harcourt from his position in the Party and in the House of Commons, or in the alternative himself to abandon the leadership of the Party, or to retire altogether into private life.

In the first object he failed, as Sir W. Harcourt's colleagues continued to act with him after Lord Rosebery's letter in all respects as they had done before.

Lord Rosebery did not adopt the latter alternative, but continued before the public as the leader of the Liberal Party while declining all political relations or consultation with his colleagues



in the House of Commons up to the date of his public resignation of the leadership of the Party on October 19, 1896. The successful campaign against the Government Education Bill in the Session of 1896 was fought in this interval in which Lord Rosebery withdrew himself from his colleagues.

The avowed ground of Lord Rosebery's resignation was a conflict of opinion between himself as leader of the Liberal Party and Mr. Gladstone on the Armenian question. He added however a somewhat obscure suggestion that he had not received the "exceptional support" of which he stood in need; such support however it was impossible to render to him in the attitude which he thought fit to adopt towards his colleagues from the dissolution in 1895 to 1896.

I have never been able to gather what were the grounds upon which Lord Rosebery founded the statement that there was such a conflict of opinion or action between him and myself as to make it impossible that we should act together as we had done from the period at which he became Prime Minister to the date of the dissolution. There were occasional differences of opinion such as occur in all Governments between some or more colleagues which if necessary are disposed of by the sense of the majority of the Cabinet, which of course prevails. According to my recollection the principal difference of opinion between Lord Rosebery and myself arose upon the policy of the Finance Bill of 1894. This however did not lead to any breach, and up to the time of the dissolution our co-operation was unbroken, for which reason I expressed in my letter of July 30 my dissent from Lord Rosebery's statement that "our connection was essentially unreal, was injurious to our Party and irksome to each other." Nor did he find any support from our colleagues in that assertion.

The only suggestion which I have seen put forward by the friends of Lord Rosebery is that I had taken at the election of 1895 a course antagonistic to his opinions, which prescribed that the only issue to be placed before the country by the Liberal Party was the reform of the House of Lords. I have no recollection that any such limitation was ever proposed by Lord Rosebery or assented to by the Cabinet. I believe that no such restriction was adopted or acted upon by any of the members of the Government.

It was impossible for me at all events to suppress the question of Temperance, having been responsible for the measure which I introduced under the sanction of Mr. Gladstone and Lord

Rosebery, but I made the question of the House of Lords a leading topic in my first speech to my constituents.

I cannot believe that this could have been a ground of complaint, for I observe that at the recent election in Lord Rosebery's letter to Captain Lambton he makes no mention of the House of Lords, and places the Temperance question in the foreground.



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### Portraits of Sir William Harcourt

In Robes of Chancellor of the Exchequer. Three-quarter length in oils. By A. S. Cope, R.A. Presented by the Sir William Harcourt Portrait Committee. At Nuneham. Replicas of this portrait in National Liberal Club and the Oxford and Cambridge Club.

Drawing in Chalk. By Samuel Lawrence. 1853. At Nuneham.

Drawing. By Reginald Cholmondeley. ca. 1855. At Nuneham.

Miniature. By C. Couzens. 1856. At Nuneham.

Pencil Drawing. By G. F. Watts, R.A. ca. 1853. In the possession of Lady Harcourt.

As Justinian in "School of Legislation." By G. F. Watts, R.A. 1860. In Lincoln's Inn Hall.

Water Colour Drawing. By Cecil Cutler. 1895. At Nuneham.

Bust in Marble. By Waldo Story. 1899. At Nuneham.

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